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JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST.

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JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE GREATNESS AND HOLINESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

BY
THE REV. P. MILLET, S.J.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BY

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:
BENZIGER BROTHERS,
Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

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Imprimatur.

✠MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,
Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, June 29, 1901.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS work was originally written in French and first published in 1858. The present translation is made from the Italian. The translator, through two agents, endeavored to procure a copy of it in French, but none could be found. The Italian translation has gone through four editions, the last of which was published in 1898. The Italian and French being sister languages, it is not likely that the English translation would be much different from what it is if it had been made directly from the French.

The translator, while in Rome in 1899, picked up a copy of the work in a book-store. He was attracted by the title, and still more by the table of contents. No book he had read on the subject seemed quite satisfactory. He began to read this, and was fairly carried away by its order, its precision, its luminous teaching, its deep spirituality and its common sense. When he had read it through, he put it aside for some months and then took it up again. It was even more instructive, edifying and delightful than when first read, thus fulfilling in a measure the conditions of a classic. He

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thought that a work which had so pleased him and which, he hopes, has done him some good, might be serviceable to others, and accordingly he set about translating it. He hopes it may be as acceptable to his brethren in the priesthood as it has been to him.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THIS work, of which a new edition is in press, was published some years ago without the author's name. The reception which was then given it, in spite of its many defects, has led me to believe that, if it were carefully revised, it might be still useful, and I have accordingly done this, besides making considerable additions.

The title which I give it necessarily forbids mention in its pages of certain vices which at times dishonor the Sanctuary, and I have therefore excluded all such matter. A long experience, gained in giving retreats to ecclesiastics, has taught me, first, that it is very beneficial to remind a priest of his sublime vocation and to strongly impress upon his mind whatever will best serve to withdraw him from all that is base and mean; and, next, that he should be encouraged rather than frightened. While his mission is to do good, many struggles and gainsayings come to him from every side, and, of all temptations, discouragement is the most frequent and the most depressing. My purpose is to place this book at his side as a friend

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to buoy him up, to strengthen and console him; as a friend who will ceaselessly speak to him, saying: Courage, courage, O man of God! You are going along the same road already traversed by your Divine Master. He looks down upon you from High Heaven and is preparing to crown, not what you successfully accomplish, but what you honestly endeavor to do.

The only end which I propose to myself in this work is to increase the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ in priests and, through them, in all Christian peoples. Deign, Divine Master, to bless it and make it an instrument for Thy glory.

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PLAN OF THIS WORK.

CONSIDERATION I.

General Idea of the Priest.

The Priest, by reason of the power which he exercises, is another Jesus Christ. He should be another Jesus Christ by the spirit which animates him. Causes of feebleness and inefficiency in the ministry. As the Priest can do nothing except in and through Jesus Christ, he should ceaselessly study his Divine Model, imitate and love Him.

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JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST.

Consideration First.

GENERAL IDEA OF THE PRIEST.

Section First.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIEST.

ALL peoples of the earth have each had a religion, a worship and ministers set apart to discharge its functions. All peoples have regarded the priesthood as the highest dignity to which mortal man could be raised, and even kings were never encompassed with greater respect or regarded with more profound veneration than when they united in their persons the sanctity of the priesthood and the majesty of empire.

But what was the priesthood of the pagans, what was even the priesthood of the Jews, as compared with the priesthood of Christ?

The Fathers of the Church can not speak, save in terms of admiration and transport, of the surpassing

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greatness and magnificence of the priesthood of the New Law.

Quantam dignitatem contulit vobis Deus, says St. Bernard, *quanta est prærogativa ordinis vestri! Prætulit vos Deus regibus et imperatoribus, prætulit vestrum ordinem omnibus ordinibus; immo, ut altius loquar, prætulit vos angelis et archangelis, thronis et dominationibus. Sicut enim non angelos sed semen Abrahæ apprehendit ad faciendam redemptionem; sic non angelis sed hominibus, solisque sacerdotibus, corporis et sanguinis commisit consecrationem.*[1]

Vere veneranda sacerdotum dignitas, says St. Augustine, *in quorum manibus Dei Filius, velut in utero Virginis, incarnatur.*

St. Bernard calls priests *parentes Christi*, for they are, as he explains, *Pater Christi generando, Mater Christi pariendo, Frater et Soror Christi caste diligendo.*

Pope St. Clement sums all this up in the phrase, *Post Deum, terrenus Deus.*[2]

The language of the Fathers will not seem extravagant once we have attentively considered the extraordinary prerogatives of the Catholic priest and the exalted position he occupies in the world.

All communication between earth and heaven had been broken off by sin. To bring about a reconciliation and re-establish harmony, a Man-God was necessary. The only Son of the Most High, forsaking His home and heritage, came down from heaven and, clad in our humanity, dwelt as one of them among the sons of

[1] Sermo ad Past. in Synod.
[2] Const. Apost.

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men. A stranger, says St. Augustine, in the midst of this people, He wrought a holy and an admirable work, taking upon Him the fruits which an ungrateful world produced, namely, humiliations, sufferings and death, and giving in exchange goods beyond price, namely, grace, salvation and everlasting life: *Venit accipere contumelias, dare honores; venit haurire dolorem, dare salutem; venit subire mortem, dare vitam.*[1]

Having during His sojourn here on earth busied Himself with the great interests of God and men, He went up to heaven to occupy Himself with His Father more especially in behalf of men. He is our agent with His Father; He looks after our business; He is, as St. Paul says, our advocate: *Ever living to make intercession for us.*

There is therefore a commerce in holy things between earth and heaven. Our interests are in heaven, as Bossuet says, or rather we have no real interests on earth, but only in heaven.

God, however, has interests on earth and among men; souls are to be gained and the elect to be gathered in from every quarter of the globe. It is necessary, therefore, that He have His agents here on earth, and these are His priests. They are the ambassadors of God among men; they intercede for men with God, and, because of this double character, they are constituted intermediaries between the Creator and His creatures. They make known to men the will of God; they offer to God the prayers of men; they

[1] In Ps. xxx.

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receive from heaven the blessings they bring to earth; and they take from earth that which they offer up to heaven. They are the dispensers of the blessings and mercies which they receive in answer to their prayers.

Thus, the priesthood in its origin is of heaven, but its functions are exercised on earth. This is the mysterious ladder of Jacob, on the top of which God rested, and the priests are the angels, who go up and down continuously, keeping up an uninterrupted communication between earth and heaven.

The bond of this divine intercourse is the Man-God: He is the eternal Pontiff, the Chief Priest of His Testament, the one Mediator between God and men: *One God, one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus.*[1] But since His ascension in glory, His visible presence is no longer with us; the Church, however, being a visible society, needs a visible priesthood and visible sacraments. This is why the Saviour has chosen from among men certain co-workers and helpers. They are to perpetuate in a visible and sensible way the ministry which He Himself exercised during the years of His mortal life.

What then is the work of priests in the Catholic Church? It is none other than the work of continuing the functions of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, who, as St. Thomas says, uses them as instruments: *Instrumentum Dei tanquam principalis agentis.* They are the tools of God. He is the Master-Worker. This is why the Council of Trent calls them the vicars of

[1] I. Tim. ii. 5.

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Christ. He has left priests to be His own vicars, says the Council.

Hence there is only one priesthood, the Catholic priesthood being the very priesthood of Jesus Christ, communicated in different degrees to bishops and priests, who personally exercise it in His place and name.

The priest as such is then another Jesus Christ: *Sacerdos alter Christus.* He is the living personification of Him; he discharges His duties in His name; he occupies a place apart in the mystical body of the Saviour; he exercises in the Church the office of the Head, transmitting to its members the sap of the living vine and the spirit of life; or rather it is Jesus Christ who does all this through the ministry of the priest; it is Jesus Christ who lives and works in him.

Follow the priest in the exercise of his functions. The priest discharges the office of teacher. When he teaches from the chair of truth, it is Jesus Christ who speaks through his mouth: *God exhorting through him,* as St. Paul says.

If he should speak in his own name, any one would be free to examine his teaching, discuss it, reject it; for who is the man who has a right to force his opinions upon another? A professor in his chair or a writer in his works can give to his teaching and opinions only a human authority, and for this reason these are always liable to be challenged. He frequently makes mistakes, and it may be necessary to prove to him that his assertions are hazardous, his judgments false and his conclusions unwarranted and not contained in his premises.

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But it is quite otherwise with the priest. His teaching is not a system of philosophy, subject to discussion and dispute. Catholic dogma, in its nature mysterious and divine, is made known by revelation and must be accepted on faith and received by the intellect. The philosopher is ever casting about, hesitating, wavering and giving his pupils opinions more or less plausible; the priest speaks as one having authority; he solemnly affirms his teaching as the infallible utterance of eternal truth.

The Protestant minister, it is true, comes with the Bible in his hand, but in taking that Book from its lawful custodian, he cannot get from it its true meaning. He will interpret it after his own fashion, but he will never get out of it a common symbol of belief or a creed which all will accept as binding. To him was never said: *Go teach*, nor was he given the assurance: *I am with you even to the consummation of the world.* Only the Catholic priest can say: The doctrine which I preach to you is not mine; I have not thought out in the silence of my study erudite theories and ingenious systems to lay them before you; I do not speak in my own name. United with the head of the diocese and through him with the Chair of St. Peter, he stands forth as the echo of the divine voice which was heard more than eighteen centuries ago throughout Judea, and whose words he was sent to repeat in every age, carrying the glad tidings from city to city and from house to house to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Whosoever listens to this voice, listens to Jesus Christ, and whosoever rejects it, rejects Jesus Christ: *He that*

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heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.[1]

The priest administers the sacraments, but it is Jesus Christ who by his hand unseals the fountains of grace and floods with it the souls of the faithful.

A child is borne to the baptismal fount; the priest pours water on the head of the new-born infant and forthwith it is purified, born again, sanctified. To what is this marvellous change to be attributed? To the matter? By no means; for what connection is there between a material element and the outpouring of divine grace? To the merits of the priest? Certainly not. John the Baptist was the greatest, the holiest and the most perfect of the sons of men; he baptized, but his baptism did not loose from sin. In the Church the essential effect is the same whether the baptism be administered by a holy or a sinful priest. And why is this so? Because it is Jesus Christ who baptizes.

The priest is sitting in the tribunal of penance. A sinner presents himself; justice and mercy are in conflict; justice demands the condemnation of the guilty one, mercy appeals for pardon. Who shall decide the question? The priest. He pronounces sentence and mercy triumphs. What? Has he, a weak mortal, the power to disarm the Omnipotent and snatch the thunderbolt from His hands? Assuredly not, if he should act in his own name; but Jesus Christ dwells in the priest and gives judgment by his mouth. Should

[1] Luke x. 16.

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Jesus Christ come in Person from heaven into a church to administer the sacrament of reconciliation, and should He say to a penitent: *I absolve thee;* and should a priest sitting at His side in the tribunal of penance pronounce over a penitent the self-same words: *I absolve thee*, there is no question that in the latter case as in the former the penitent would be equally loosed from his sins.

At the altar in Holy Mass it is Jesus Christ who offers gifts, changes the bread and wine into His own Body and Blood, and immolates the victim: *Qui sanctificat et immutat, Ipse est*, says St. John Chrysostom. As Jesus Christ and the Church, according to the thought of St. Augustine, are not two Christs, but one Christ,[1] so the Eternal Priest and all priests born in time are not a multitude of priests, but one Priest. The man disappears in this august mystery and his personality is converted into that of the Man-God, who gives him power to say at the moment of consecration: *This is My Body.*

A priest sets out for a distant mission; you marvel at his zeal, his charity and his sacrifice, but it is Jesus Christ who works in him that which unaided nature could never accomplish.

Observe those fearless messengers of the divine word, who, at the peril of their lives, hasten into every land upon which the sun shines and traverse every highway of the sea, having only one thought, that of gaining souls to God. So great is their zeal that it encom-

[1] Christus et ecclesia non duo sunt Christi, sed unus Christus.

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passes the earth. No one can escape its influence: *There is no one that can hide himself from his heat.*[1] To save men whom they know not they are prepared to endure the severest privations and the most toilsome fatigues. Nothing affrights them, neither the length of the journey, the perils of the ocean, the ferocity of barbarians, nor the anticipation of torture and death. In the East they pitch their tents beside that of the wandering Arab; in Africa the burning sands are bathed with their sweat; in America they cross rivers and penetrate into the depths of the forest; they traverse one after another the distant islands of Oceanica; they purple with their blood the inhospitable plains of China. Does such heroism come from themselves, and is it to be sought in their natural strength of character? By no means: it is the grace of the priesthood which buoys them up and sustains them; it is the spirit of Jesus Christ which urges them on, animates and inflames them.

A comparison is often made between the Catholic priest and the Protestant minister. The latter goes to seek his fortune among the heathen, the former to seek a martyr's crown. Aspirations so different amply attest that the impelling principle is not the same in each. In the Catholic priest there is something more than human, for in him Jesus Christ speaks and works and accomplishes. That the Catholic priest should plan and successfully execute great and sublime things, beyond the power of man, is not to be marvelled at.

[1] Psal. xviii. 7.

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But when man depends upon his own powers he cannot reasonably expect a greater degree of heroism than that of which nature is the inspiration: and this is a very low degree.

Hence, O Priest of the Lord, yours is not the glory if your words are potent over the hearts of men; if you lead back sinners into the right path; if you convert the heathen; if you inspire a love of virtue: while the words of the heretic, like those of the philosopher, are unfruitful and but an empty sound beating the air. Both the heretic and the philosopher may be talented, clever, eloquent; they may enlighten the mind and make learned men; but to get souls to practise the great virtues, to form real Christians, something more than natural gifts is needed. For this the divine cooperation is necessary and the influence of grace.

The priest on the day of his ordination received this sacred investiture of grace, this strength from on high, which gives life to his words, makes him a light to shine out in the darkness, a curb to restrain, and a support on which to rest securely; and the less of the human there is in his discourses the greater will be their influence over the hearts of men.

It is Jesus Christ who lives and acts in the priest, and this is why holy and noble enterprises expand and grow to be great agencies for good under his guidance and influence. He communicates to them the spirit of life. On the other hand, all institutions religious in character, all moral and philanthropic associations, not touched by the hand of the priest and vivified by his

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breath, languish, wither and die. Works of charity cannot exist without him; the unfortunate must have his assistance, and his providential care in their regard is visible to all the world. It is Jesus Christ who lives and acts in the priest. This is why he has power to reform and to make perfect, not only individuals, but entire nations, for his is preeminently a civilizing influence.

Human agencies cannot soften the manners of the cruel, or bring a people from the darkness of idolatry to the light of the Gospel. Gold and power and science are but poor and weak expedients for such a work. Look at England, heretical England. Impelled by restless strength and energy, and urged on by a boundless ambition, making conquest after conquest, she has grown to be a giant power. She dominates the sea, her navy covers the ocean, and her dominion reaches from end to end of the earth. At the height of her greatness and strength she is seized with an unaccountable ardor to proselytize. She sends her missionaries everywhere; she lavishes wealth upon them; they go into every clime, and are protected under the shelter of her cannon and her fortresses. Well and good. But can a nation be named, or a tribe or a savage people, which she has really improved, reformed or converted? Here is a poor Catholic priest, alone, bearing the Cross in his hand, who within a few years will do what the apostles of error, what all the powers of the earth, cannot accomplish in centuries.

The civilizer of the rude savage, the priest is equally the regenerator of the cultivated barbarian. He alone

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can call back to life nations whose grave scepticism and impiety are digging.[1]

When a people robbed of its birthright of the faith, and for years in the throes of anarchy, has overthrown and well-nigh destroyed its ancient institutions, there is no power but the priesthood that can reestablish order, restore peace, and place the empire once more on a solid and lasting foundation.

After the excessive corruptions of Paganism the world was overwhelmed with the disasters growing out of them, and scourged with the hollow systems of philosophy which they naturally produced. The priest took that dying pagan society in his arms, lifted it up to heaven in order that he might bring it nearer to God and consecrate it to Him, and then he restored it to earth full of new life and productive vigor.

This is what the priest did sixteen centuries ago, and he is called upon to exercise the same beneficent influence in our own day. The leading men of the age set themselves to invent new political systems and to change and modify in a thousand ways forms of government, but the happiness of mankind cannot be brought about by such means. The crime and misfortune of modern society consist in this, that it has severed its relations with God, and hence it has been visited by disaster after disaster and is daily sinking to lower depths. If it will not perish, it must return to the great and only liberator whom God has given to the

[1] The author was a Frenchman and this work was primarily written for French priests. This will account for the frequent references in the course of it to France and the French Revolution. — *Tr.*

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human race, namely, to the priesthood established by Jesus Christ to continue His work and perpetuate its beneficent fruits. Yes, in the Catholic priest are the hope of the future and the priceless germs of social regeneration, because to him were committed the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of the sacraments. He does not defend the State with arms, but, being a soldier of Jesus Christ, he contends for truth, order and justice, which are the pledges of the peace and happiness of nations. An advance guard of the faith of Christ, he scatters among the people religious beliefs, ideas of morality, notions of duty and that admirable store of doctrines which establishes and defines the relations between the Creator and the creature, between ruler and subject, and between the different members of society. The so-called man of culture teaches theories and explains the phenomena of nature; the priest teaches the science of duty by which public order is maintained and individual liberty protected.

Hence the priest is a man who is necessary to society. He is to it what the soul is to the body, diffusing throughout its members a healthy moral life. It is clear, then, that the priest should be able to resist assaults of every kind and be superior to every trial. Furious passions will be let loose upon him, swords will be unsheathed against him, fires will be lighted and gibbets set up, but when the persecutors will have passed away and the hangman will have wearied of his work, the priest will live on.

See what has happened almost within our own memory. When power passed into the hands of the

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genius of evil, he easily destroyed all the venerable institutions of the country; but when he stretched forth his hand to strike down the priest, the latter stood forth an intrepid and majestic figure even under the axe of the executioner. A gibbet was set up that he might die an ignominious death upon it, but he converted it into a throne of honor from which he proclaimed the royal dignity of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. It was not the priest, but the man, who was sent an exile into desert lands and strangled on the public squares. The man perished in those bloody executions, as did the humanity of Christ on the Cross by the hands of a deicide. As the divinity of the Saviour remained intact and impassible amid the sufferings of Calvary and the horrors of the sepulchre, so also did the Catholic priesthood amid the sanguinary terrors of the Revolution. The Catholic priesthood did not die, nor could it die, because the Lord of life and death said to His disciples when He sent them into the world: *I am with you all days, even to the end of time.*[1]

The unbelievers of the last century represented the priest as a useless being, as a person of no consequence in the world. But in our own day every reasonable man, if he has profited by the lessons of experience, will readily grant that the priest is a most important factor, particularly in the solution of the great social problems of the age, because he represents Jesus Christ among men, which is equivalent to saying that in him are embodied the principles of order, justice and stability.

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20.

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Take away the priest, and the dogmas of religion are without an exponent, and moral duties without a sanction. And what remains? In theory a sceptical philosophy and hollow systems; in reality the domination of egotism and the triumph of lust; anarchy in the intellect, and corruption in the heart.

Remove the priest, and forthwith the bond that unites earth with heaven is snapped. There will be no longer a sacrifice or an Altar; no longer a worship or religious teaching; no longer anything to remind man of his future destiny; and in consequence he will cease to believe in the rewards and chastisements of another life. And then what will happen? The pent-up passions, being no longer under restraint, will burst forth like a torrent which sweeps away all barriers and rushes madly over its banks. Man, filled with the spirit of hatred and bent on deeds of violence, rapine and murder, will carry desolation and terror into every home. Then will be committed horrible and unheard-of deeds; then will be repeated the story of Ninety-three.

It is impossible, then, to ignore or despise the priest. Every one recognizes him as the teacher of truth, the custodian of morals, and the guardian angel of society. This is why all good men love and respect him, and why the lawless hate and persecute him.

Only the true Christian can appreciate the mysterious greatness of the priest. He sees in him, not a man of this age or that, but a man whose influence stretches out into eternity. He sees in him the dispenser of grace and the representative of the Incarnate Word,

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whose life and divine mission are perpetuated in those whom He has sent to do His work. And how dear is the priest to all true Catholics! How they encompass him with their love and veneration! How saddened they are when they see his rights violated, his independence menaced, his august ministry without defence and exposed to the outrages of the impious! All these things are for them the renewal of the bloody drama of Calvary which brought such dreadful calamities upon a deicide people.

Lamartine, who frequently had happy inspirations, has drawn a magnificent pen-picture of the priest. This is the beginning of it:

"There is a man in every parish," he says, "who, having no family, belongs to a family that is world-wide; who is called in as a witness, a counsellor and an actor in all the most important affairs of civil life. No one comes into the world or goes hence without his ministrations. He takes the child from the arms of his mother and parts with him only at the grave. He blesses and consecrates the cradle, the bridal chamber, the bed of death and the bier. He is one whom innocent children grow to love, to venerate and to reverence; whom even those who know him not salute as *Father;* at whose feet Christians fall down and lay bare the inmost thoughts of their souls and weep their most sacred tears. He is one whose mission it is to console the afflicted and soften the pains of body and soul; who is an intermediary between the affluent and the indigent; to whose door come alike the rich and the poor—the rich to give alms in secret, and the

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poor to receive them without blushing. He belongs to no social class, because he belongs equally to all—to the lower by his poverty and not unfrequently by his humble birth; to the upper by his culture and his knowledge, and by the elevated sentiments which a religion, itself all charity, inspires and imposes. He is one, in fine, who knows all, has a right to speak unreservedly, and whose speech, inspired from on high, falls on the minds and hearts of all with the authority of one who is divinely sent, and with the constraining power of one who has an unclouded faith.

"Such is the parish priest, than whom no one has a greater opportunity for good or power for evil, accordingly as he fulfils or fails to recognize his transcendent mission among men."

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CHAPTER II.

THE PRIEST SHOULD BE ANOTHER CHRIST, IN THE SPIRIT WHICH ANIMATES HIM.

EVERY one recognizes that a great moral power resides in the Catholic priesthood.

Still the effects of this moral power are not the same in all those who exercise the priestly functions.

In human enterprises success depends less on moral qualifications than on the knowledge and industry of those who undertake them. A man may be notorious for his scandalous life, for his impiety and immorality, and yet be a great artist, whose works are masterpieces; or a clever business man, growing rich by trade; or a profound politician, guiding with firm hand the ship of State; or a skilful general, leading his soldiers to victory. All these are, properly speaking, human avocations in which God leaves man free to exercise his talents and his energy.

But the case is quite different in the ministry of the Church: there success is due less to great talents than to great virtues.

There are gifted priests, possessing great stores of knowledge and to all appearance enjoying the most exceptional opportunities to render themselves serviceable to the Church, and who nevertheless pass their

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entire lives without doing anything worthy of special notice and without having notably contributed to the spiritual welfare of their brethren.

There have been others in different ages of the Church who, though destitute of all human means, have exercised a great and marvellous influence, stirring up whole populations and in a short space of time regenerating parishes, cities and entire provinces.

Whence comes the difference? The reply is ready at hand; and while there is no priest to whom it is unknown, it is highly important that all ministers of the Sanctuary should make it the subject of serious and profound meditation.

We say, then, that there is in us a dominant spirit that determines the character and worth of our actions. To be a reasonable man it is necessary to be led and directed by reason. To be a true Christian it is necessary to be led and directed by the spirit of Jesus Christ. To be a priest, working successfully for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, it is still further necessary to submit to be led and directed by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

I. To be a reasonable man it is necessary to be led and directed by reason.

What is man? A rational animal, said the ancients; an intelligence served by organs, or, if you will, an incarnated intelligence, say the moderns. His soul is a substance simple and immaterial, it possesses intelligence and sensation, and serves as an intermediary and bond to unite the two worlds of spirit and matter of which creation is made up.

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By his faculty of sense man belongs to the corporeal world and is united with matter; by his faculty of reflecting, by his intelligence and reason, he becomes part of the intellectual world, enters into the realm of spirit and, while himself part of established order, is subject to it. He is part angel and part animal, having a dual life, that of the senses and that of the reason.

The food of the life of the senses are material pleasures and animal sensations; the food of the life of the reason is whatever is true, whatever is just, whatever is endowed with beauty, with moral and intellectual excellence. The term of the first of these lives is the earth; the term of the second is God, the final end.

Now it does not require much thought to determine which of these two lives is the more noble and which ought to rule and dominate in man. The life of the senses is clearly the inferior of the two, since this is common to man and the lower animals. One who would cultivate the senses alone and whose only thought would be the pursuit of carnal pleasure, the gratification of the sensuous appetite and the baser passions, would be, even in the judgment of the Pagans themselves, no better than a repulsive monster. To raise one's self to the dignity of a rational man it is necessary, even according to them, to cultivate and perfect the intelligence and to subject the senses and the passions to the control of reason.

But this is not all. Man has certain duties to God, who created him for His own glory and assigned him a special place in the hierarchy of beings.

Man is the key in the arch of the visible universe.

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All things centre in him; he draws and attracts to himself all creation. But why? Is it that he may appropriate all these to himself, dispose of them according to his good pleasure and constitute himself their supreme arbiter? By no means. He has no such right. Man is not an independent sovereign. He is a vassal, and above him stands the Proprietor to whom he owes submission and obedience. Man alone, among all the beings that dwell upon the earth, is endowed with intelligence and free will, and his mission is that of mediator and pontiff, to offer in the name of all love and gratitude to Him who created all and who preserves and governs all. In a word, man is the link between God and creatures. He conducts them to their Creator, and in going to God himself he brings all the lower creation with him.

The light of reason teaches this much, and hence any one who wishes to be regarded as a rational man must govern his life according to the teaching of this light.

II. To be a Christian it is necessary to be led and directed by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Christian is a supernatural man; his life is more elevated and more perfect, both in principle and aim, than the life of the purely rational man can be.

What is the principle of the rational life? The natural light of reason, the interior voice of conscience. What is the principle of the Christian life? Grace, which communicates to the intelligence a supernatural light, and to the will a strength superior to nature.

What is the scope and term of the rational life?

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The subjection and discipline of the passions, whence results that combination of virtues called wisdom. What is the scope and term of the Christian life? A supernatural perfection, called sanctity, to which is promised the possession of God in glory.

Man has his beginning in the life of nature, his progress in the life of grace, and his end and ultimate perfection in the life of glory. The life of nature makes man a reasonable being, a philosopher and, in a worldly sense, a sage. The life of grace makes the Christian just, perfect and acceptable to God. The life of glory makes him blessed, a saint with a saint's rewards and triumphs. Hence a Christian while on earth is a being who belongs to the world of sense, because like the animal he has a body, and to the world of reason, because like the philosopher he has an intelligence. But he does not content himself with these two worlds: he passes beyond them and reaches out into a better, which is his true home. No one can enter into this supernatural world and live its life who has not been born again, who has not, according to the strong expression of St. Paul, been *created in Jesus Christ*.[1] The supernatural world was shattered by Adam, it was restored, *reestablished by Jesus Christ*.[2] As Adam is the tree of death, so is Jesus Christ the tree of life.

All Christianity is contained in these two words. Baptism unites us to the Man-God and sows in us the germ of a new life, spiritual and divine. To cultivate this priceless germ, to develop it, to make it bring

[1] Eph. ii. 10. [2] Eph. i. 10.

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forth abundant fruit for a blessed eternity, is the occupation, the work, the life of a Christian on earth.

But if the divine germ is to grow and flourish, bear flower and fruit, it must be clear of all obstacles; all parasitic plants, that spring up around it, suffocate it, and shut out from it the dews of heaven, must be plucked up and cast away. These dangerous and poisonous plants come from the old Adam within us. They must be plucked out. The outer man, the life of sense—concupiscence, curiosity, pride and all that is sensual and lawless within us—must be conquered and utterly vanquished. When this is done, the latent fruitfulness of the divine germ will put forth its strength and beauty, a marvellous change will take place in us and we shall be transformed into new men.

Consider attentively this man who has come out from the realm of sense and pure reason. He dwells with Jesus Christ upon the heights of faith, from which he dominates the world of matter and all lower things. His reason, united with that of the Word-made-flesh, is rectified, perfected, expanded. It ascends up to the very throne of God, whence it wanders through immensity and dwells in the regions of the Infinite. Lifted up beyond the clouds of error, it fixes its gaze in contemplation upon eternal truth. All that passes away seems trifling, vile, despicable; in its sight nothing is great and noble save the Divine, the Eternal, the Infinite.

To ascend to heights so sublime neither study nor knowledge will suffice; for this prayer and humility are indispensable. To comprehend and relish the things

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of God, to discover those marvels which sustain the soul in its raptures and ecstasies, great penetration of intellect and splendid talents will not avail; for this is required that supernatural intuition which Jesus Christ gives to those who keep themselves united with Him, that intuition, which is a sort of sixth sense, more perfect than the other five, by means of which things present and things future are seen as Jesus Christ saw them when on earth, and as God sees them from the centre of His eternity.

Thus, to perform acts supernatural, holy and meritorious of eternal life, it is indispensable that the faculties whence they proceed should have received a divine consecration; that man should be united by grace with the Head of the regenerated human race; that the spirit of this Head should abide in his soul and communicate to its works the sap of life. The closer and more intimate this union is, and the more the supernatural life unfolds and blossoms into beauty, the more perfect Christian he will be. But if only the chief actions of the Christian be inspired and directed by the spirit of Jesus Christ, he will not be such except at intervals, that is, he will be an imperfect Christian. If, however, Jesus Christ dominates his whole life down to the simplest and most ordinary actions, whether he eats or whether he drinks, as St. Paul says; if the Christian can say with this great Apostle that he is dead to every delight of sense and inclination of nature, *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*,[1] then, God be praised, we shall have a perfect

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

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Christian, such as the Saviour wishes he should be whom He makes His representative and the continuator of His mission among men.

III. In order that a priest may bring glory to God and salvation to the souls of men he must be under the influence and direction of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is the spirit of Jesus Christ which, abiding in a simple Christian, sanctifies his actions and gives them a supernatural worth. So, also, the spirit of Jesus Christ, operative in a priest, vivifies and renders fruitful his ministry. There is this difference between the two, namely, that while in the first instance the working of grace may be wholly interior and not go beyond the sanctuary of the conscience, in the second it will be at once interior and exterior; interior, sanctifying the priest himself, and exterior, making him an instrument of salvation to others.

When Jesus Christ separated Himself from us and went up into heaven, He left priests, whom He appointed in His place to be His representatives on earth and to show forth and illustrate in their persons the holiness of His teaching and the excellence of His virtues. His going was like that of the sun in the heavens, which, sinking beneath the horizon and leaving our hemisphere, communicates its light to the moon and the planets, which in its absence illuminate the earth by night and shine with a borrowed radiance.

Thus the Son of God, having ascended up on high, left in His Church apostles, bishops, and priests as so many luminaries to be the light of the world during His absence. They are His lieutenants and vicars, and

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therefore they should be His exact images, precisely reproducing in themselves the form of the Divine Original.

But this is not all. Priests should not only be in their persons living, visible copies of Jesus Christ, they should also reproduce Him in others. This is the order of Divine Wisdom, which in the operations of grace ordinarily follows the same rule as in the operations of nature. By divine ordinance the life of grace and the supernatural virtues are communicated to us by secondary causes, that is, by the ministry of priests, as physical life is transmitted to us by the concurrence of our parents. The priest, then, is a spiritual father who generates spiritual children to Christ Jesus: *Quos iterum parturio.* But the father cannot give to the child what he does not himself possess, and the priest will not be able to give to his spiritual children humility, charity and meekness if he be not himself meek, charitable and humble.

On the other hand, it should be observed that the priest is only the instrumental cause in the work of the sanctification of souls, his efficiency coming not from himself, but from the hand that employs him. Hence the more intimately he is united with Jesus Christ and the greater his dependence upon Him, the more powerful and efficacious will be his influence on souls.

Phidias, having got a commission to make a statue of Jupiter, said: "This is a great work, because I am charged to reproduce, not a man, but in very truth a god": *Magnum opus magnus labor.* The priest should say the same, but with a greater truth. It is

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indeed a great undertaking to transform an old Adam and make of him a new man after the pattern of Jesus Christ. The marble yields to the hammer and is passively shaped into forms of beauty by the chisel of the sculptor; the canvas receives unresistingly the figures traced by the painter; but this is not true of the human soul. The passions are there to battle against the efforts of the artificer and to destroy in an instant the work he has begun. Who shall overcome this obstacle? Should not the priest set to work deep down in the very depths of that soul and impress upon it with all the skill and delicacy of an artist a true likeness and a living image of Jesus Christ?

Since the priesthood is a state apart, a sacred and exclusive domain, in which the master worker is God the Saviour, it is clear that the priest will be more or less successful in his work in the measure in which he is more or less faithful in subordinating his action to that of the Divine Workman, in humbly following His guidance, and in, as it were, identifying himself with Him and thus making his ministry fruitful for the sanctification of others.

Finally, let us seriously set to work to examine ourselves. What life is dominant in us? There are, as we have said, three kinds of life: the animal life, whose motive is pleasure, and whose end is the gratification of the senses; the rational life, which has its seat in the natural faculties of man, and whose aim is the perfection in him of his moral and intellectual being; and the Christian life, whose principle is divine grace, whose aim is the perfection of the supernatural man, and

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whose end is the eternal union of the soul with God in glory.

The first of these lives, as is clear from its motive and aim, is one that degrades, dishonors and lowers man to the level of the brute. Such a life in one who is baptized is a crime and an infamy, and in a priest would be so repulsive and monstrous that it could excite only contempt and abhorrence.

The life of the reason is an incomplete life, a sort of barren idolatry of self, in which man absorbs and consumes, in a finite and limited existence, those moral powers with which he is endowed to enable him to rise to the Infinite God. A priest who would rest content with such a life, which is nothing more nor less than a return to the philosophy of the Pagans, would not only betray his priesthood, he would be recreant to Christianity itself.

What is a priest? He is the minister of a better world, sent to withdraw men from the vanities of this and to teach them, according to the beautiful expression of Scripture, to walk in the ways that lead to God. The priest, then, should live by faith, he should live a supernatural life; and the further he advances in the spiritual life, and the more fully he realizes in himself his dignity as man, his privilege as a Christian, and his character as a priest and representative of Jesus Christ, the more faithfully will he labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

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CHAPTER III.

CAUSES OF STERILITY IN THE SACRED MINISTRY.

HAVING demonstrated that a good priest must be under the influence and guidance of the spirit of Jesus Christ, this would be the proper place to show what the faithless priest grows to be who surrenders himself to the spirit of wickedness and unhappily becomes his bondsman.

A priest of this character, a priest of vicious life and scandalous conduct, is the greatest enemy to God, the greatest enemy to the Church, aye, the greatest enemy to himself. He is an enemy to God, because, instead of glorifying Him, he dishonors Him; he is an enemy to the Church, because, instead of edifying her, he lays her waste and destroys her; he is an enemy to himself, because, instead of the reward which awaited him, he is preparing for himself a life of dishonor, a death of terror, a tremendous judgment and an unspeakable eternity.

We had gone this far in drawing out this terrible picture when we ourselves were frightened at it, and we could not bring ourselves to go on and lay it in full before our readers. For who will read our book? Good priests or those who wish to become such. Why should they be saddened by a picture which has no application to them? Those to whom it would apply will not read the book: *The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins contemneth.*[1]

When a wicked priest, if there be such, becomes a scourge who destroys and a wolf who murders the souls of the flock whose salvation is entrusted to him, then is verified the saying, *corruptio optimi pessima.* Such a priest, let us hope, is an exception. For the most part

[1] Prov. xviii. 3

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priests are good men, and even their enemies admit that in no age have they given less cause for censure than in the present.

If the Church had need only of priests, whose lives by universal admission are beyond reproach, then never in any age was she more favored, more happy or more flourishing than in our own. But if this be so, where is that living faith, where those splendid conquests that distinguished past ages?

We hear it said at times that the priestly order, so often decimated by the sword of revolution, has not been able to repair even its losses, and that priests, because of their fewness and the exacting demands of their ministry, are no longer able to give themselves to serious study and to seize again the sceptre of science which in times past they held so long and with so much honor to themselves. And even grave men give this as a reason to account for the limited influence exercised by the clergy of the present day.

But in times past it required only twelve ignorant men to batter down the empire of the devil and bring the whole world under the yoke of the Gospel. And now thousands and thousands of priests, after long years of struggle, are barely able, I will not say to make conquests, but to save a single kingdom to Jesus Christ.

Ah, what is lacking is not numbers. We would not venture to say this openly, but we will whisper it in the ears of our brothers: There are too many priests, because there are many of them who, without dishonoring their calling and character, take low views of the dignity of their mission.

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Neither is knowledge what is lacking. Yet it must be confessed that our ecclesiastical studies leave much to be desired. They lack that vigor of conception and that breadth of view so indispensable to set forth and illustrate how all human sciences are necessary to Theology and are its handmaids. We have put aside the splendid *Summas* of the Middle Age, and limit ourselves to superficial handbooks which seem to answer the demands of our time.

Still, while this deficiency in Sacred Science is very real and a great drawback, it is not what is most lacking in the clergy.

What, then, is lacking? SANCTITY, SANCTITY.

But it will be said: One may have the sanctity of a Bernard or a Vincent Ferrer, of an Ignatius or a Francis Xavier, and not be called as they were to arouse whole peoples and regenerate empires. To work such marvels one must have a special call from on high.

Yes, that is true, but it is also true that God grants only to great saints the power to accomplish great things in the supernatural order. We are only instruments in the work of the sanctification of souls, but an instrument is serviceable only when it is properly adjusted to the hand of him who uses it. The grace which moves and changes hearts must come from on high. Bring me a heretic, said Cardinal Perron, and I am confident I shall convince him, but if you wish to convert him you must take him to St. Francis de Sales. The learned speak to the intellect, but to the saint is given power to touch the heart.

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How important it is to thoroughly appreciate this great truth: Of ourselves we are nothing. Dust and ashes, withered branches and bits of dry straw; nothing more; and if without the sustaining power of God we cannot, in the order of nature, so much as raise our eyes to heaven or lift an arm, how can we, in the order of grace, call back the dead to life or create men anew in Jesus Christ?

The preacher and the confessor speak to the ears of the body, *nos loquimur foris*, says St. Augustine, but God speaks to the ear of the heart. He gives knowledge of the truth to those who listen: *ipse intellectum aperit;* He fills the heart with the fear of His menaces and the surpassing excellence of His rewards: *ipse terret, ipse movet;* He builds up in the soul of man the spiritual temple: *ipse ædificat.*

St. Francis Xavier preaches at Malacca, but without fruit: behold the weakness of man. After a little while he goes back and preaches again, and all hearts are touched, moved, converted: behold the power of God. Vincent Ferrer receives a message that the Duke of Bretagne wishes to hear him preach. Not to bring discredit on his ministry he is at pains to prepare himself well. He speaks, but all hearts are cold and unmoved. The next day he goes into the pulpit, and the groans and sighs of his hearers witness to the efficacy of his words. "Ah, Father," said one of his listeners, "what a difference between your sermon to-day and that of yesterday." "My son," said the Saint, "yesterday Vincent preached, but to-day the

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Holy Ghost through Vincent." So true is it that *all sufficiency is from God.*[1]

Still, though in the great work of the salvation of souls man is literally but animated dust, that dust is omnipotent if God is with it and vivifies it.

But to whom will God communicate His omnipotence over hearts and souls? To whom will Jesus Christ communicate the gift of persuasion, that heavenly power which makes fruitful the labors of apostolic men: *ad quem respiciam?* What are we taught by the Old Testament and the New? What does experience teach us?

To work wonders in the spiritual order God has never employed and never will employ the vain and the proud, or those who too confidently rely on their own talents and personal merits. Such take to themselves the glory which belongs to Him, of which He is jealous, and which He reserves exclusively to Himself: *The Lord chose not them.*[2]

To destroy the vices of the world and its deceits He has never employed and never will employ a priest who loves the world, who lives in the world and who makes his own the language of the world and its maxims: *The Lord chose not them.*

To regenerate a parish He has never employed and never will employ a tepid priest or one who is lazy and unmortified: *The Lord chose not them.*

To lead souls back to a life of piety, to adorn them with real and solid virtue, He has never employed and He never will employ unrecollected priests, priests

[1] II. Cor. iii. 5. [2] Baruch iii. 27.

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destitute of the interior spirit, who mistake their impatience for zeal, who like noisy flies are kept in a constant fidget by the fervor of their own imagination, never at rest, always getting into trouble, ever beginning and never accomplishing anything: *The Lord chose not them.*

All these *are not of the seed of those men by whom salvation was brought to Israel.*[1]

We daily lament the havoc caused by the enemy in the field given us to cultivate and the ill success of our efforts to pluck up the tares and enrich the soil with graces and blessings. But let us put our hands on our hearts and ask ourselves if we are such instruments as we should be in the hands of God to accomplish great things. Are we so intimately united with Him by a living faith and an ardent charity that we should fear to sadden Him or thrust Him from us by our many sins? We wish to bring the people to know and believe the teachings of faith and to induce them to practise virtue, but to lift others up we must stand above them ourselves, we must be distinguished from the multitude by the practice of true and solid virtue. We say to our brethren: Lift up your hearts—*sursum corda*, and our hearts are weighted down to earth by worldly desires and grovelling attachments.

We are like books which contain the law, but do not observe it; or like guide-posts set up along the road to point the way to travellers without following it themselves. This is the way, they say, but they them-

[1] I. Mac. v. 62.

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selves never move. They decay of old age and are blown down by the storm.

But what do I say? The guide-post has fulfilled its purpose by pointing out the way. This is all that was required of it. But we priests have another office. We are set in the midst of people to be their leaders and to make easy to men of good will the way that leads to heaven. If we do not help them to go there, we become an impediment to them and block their way.

You go into a country parish: the ground is barren and without water; vegetation languishes, is sickly and parched. Poor parish, how you are to be pitied! Like the mountains of Gelboe, the vivifying rains do not descend upon you, nor the dews from heaven.

You ask: Is there not a priest in this parish? Yes, there is a pastor. Is he a bad priest? No, his life is above reproach. But does he discharge the duties of his ministry? Assuredly he does; he preaches, hears confessions and administers the sacraments. How is it, then, that after so many years of labor he has not wrought a change in the deplorable condition of this parish? That seems to me very remarkable.

We priests well know that there are ungrateful soils which, though carefully cultivated and watered, are slow to bring forth anything but briers and thorns. But we also know that, as a rule, if the soil is unproductive, it is mainly due to the neglect of the one who tills it.

That priest was sent to revive faith and piety in his parish and to make these virtues bloom afresh, but he

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is not acceptable in the sight of God because he is destitute of true virtue. His are not the ardent piety, the delicacy of conscience and the innocence of life that are alarmed and take fright at the very shadow of sin. He lives a negligent, lazy life and thus becomes himself an obstacle to the merciful designs of divine Providence towards his people. He hangs as a dark cloud between their souls and the light of heaven; he is a cloud without water, a spent star, useless except to obstruct the light and cast a shadow.

Ye priests who read this, seriously enter into yourselves. You should say: I am necessarily in one of three classes: the fervent, the tepid or the cold. My conscience, while it bears me witness I am not among the cold or sinful, will not permit me to say that I am among the fervent and perfect. What remains, therefore, for me but that middle state, which is most dangerous, first, because it cannot coexist with the holiness which should distinguish a priest, and, secondly, because it makes me stone-blind to my deplorable condition.

Ah, this explains why my lot often seems sad and burdensome. God is not satisfied with me, because He does not wish to have in His ministry a man who serves in turn two masters and gives Him only a half-hearted love. I am not satisfied with myself, because my heart is not in my work and I bear the rigorous yoke of the law without experiencing its sweet and loving consolations. Have my parishioners even reason to be satisfied with me? Am I a worthy mediator between God and His creatures? Am I so

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pure and so free from all worldly attachments as to be a fit vehicle of grace and an instrument of its communication to others?

Priests of God, all this should be seriously weighed, because it involves the question of your own salvation and the salvation of your brethren. We have voluntarily entered upon a state of life that demands eminent virtues, and we have been content to remain in a state of shameful mediocrity. Never would the Church have admitted us among her soldiers, never would she have sent us to beget Jesus Christ in the souls of others, if she had not believed that He already dwelt in our own and that we were filled and animated with His Spirit.

When one presents himself at the door of a monastery to become a monk, he is not expected from the very beginning to be perfect, but he is told to observe the conduct of those who have entered before him and who have made some progress in the career in which he is to follow, and he thus insensibly goes forward by successive stages to the practice of solid and perfect virtue. With the priest it is different. When he presents himself for ordination the Church takes it for granted that his novitiate is completed, and she does not set before him for imitation copies more or less faithful, but the Original Himself, the great Exemplar of holiness—*Imitemini quod tractatis.*

Our misfortune is that we have lost sight of this grave and solemn admonition of the consecrating bishop, and thus we follow our Divine Master only from afar: *Peter followed afar off.*[1]

[1] Luke xxii. 54.

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All apostolic men, on the contrary, all those Christian heroes and subduers of souls, whose zeal and self-sacrifice we so much admire, had their eyes continuously fixed on Jesus Christ; night and day they meditated on His life and mysteries in order to form themselves on this Divine model. *For me to live is Christ*, said St. Paul;[1] and again: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*[2] My book, said St. Francis of Assisi, is Jesus Christ crucified. By ceaselessly reading this book he became a seraphic saint and an apostle.

We readily grow to love an object on which we steadily gaze, when we fancy we discover in it inexhaustible treasures of perfection. Then love, which like fire increases by its own energy and action, moves and impels us to do great things for God, whose infinite attractiveness has subdued our hearts, because, as St. Gregory says, love wherever found accomplishes wonders, and, if it shirks difficulties, it is not love but its shadow: *Magna operatur amor, si operari renuit amor non est.*

Hence if you have any real desire to faithfully discharge your mission and to be a priest after God's heart, you must make a profound and serious study of the life of Jesus Christ, for it was He who first exercised the office of shepherd, thus teaching us by His example. You should apply yourself earnestly to the meditation of His poverty and humility, His mortification and patience, His meekness and inexhaustible

[1] Philip. i. 21. [2] I. Cor. ii. 2.

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charity. *Eat this book, . . . and I did eat it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.*[1]

Nourishing yourself with this solid food and making it, by the practice of assiduous prayer, part of the fibre of your being, you will grow in strength and generosity and become a very hero, a saint of God, another Jesus Christ on earth: *Sacerdos alter Christus.*

Here is a true portrait of an apostolic man, a holy priest, who understands and appreciates the obligations of his divine mission. In it you will recognize the masculine and vigorous outlines of the great Apostle, his intensity of purpose and attractive personality.

The state of life to which we are called demands men who are crucified to the world and the world to them; new men, who, stripped of self and of their own passions, have put on Jesus Christ; men who, dead to love of self, live only for righteousness and perfection; men who, as St. Paul says, show themselves worthy ministers of the living God in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in charity, in knowledge, in long suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the fearless preaching of the word of truth; men, in fine, who combat with the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left, in honor and dishonor, in evil report and good report, in adversity and prosperity; running themselves the good race towards their heavenly home, and encouraging others; leaving nothing undone to win them, and having ever in view only the greater glory of God. *Homines mundo crucifixos, et quibus mundus ipse crucifixus sit, vitæ nostræ ratio nos esse*

[1] Ezech. iii. 1-3.

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postulat; homines, inquam, novos, qui suis se effectibus exuerint ut Christum induerent, sibi mortuos ut justitiæ viverent, qui, ut divus Paulus ait, in laboribus, in vigiliis, in jejuniis, in castitate, in scientia, in longanimatate, in suavitate, in Spiritu Sancto, in caritate non ficta, in verbo veritatis, se Dei ministros exhibeant, ut per arma justitiæ a dextris et a sinistris, per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per infamiam et bonam famam, per prospera denique et adversa magnis iteneribus ad cœlestem patriam et ipsi contendant et alios etiam quacumque possunt ope studioque compellant, maximam Dei gloriam intuentes.[1]

Such were St. Bernard and St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis Regis. And hence what wonders they left behind them for our example, what victories they won from the infernal enemy, what magnificent conquests they made!

Truly, says St. Teresa, if preachers and priests of God's word make so few conversions, it is because there is still in them too much of the human, too much of worldly wisdom, and too little of the divine fire with which the Apostles were aglow, too little of that heroism which made the saints despise shame and infamy, torture and death, when there was question of giving glory to God and gaining souls for Him.

Oh, what a treasure is a holy priest for a parish, for a city, for a diocese and often for a whole kingdom! What good will he not accomplish? There was a time when twelve men were enough to convert a whole world.

[1] See II. Cor. vi. 1–11.

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The world is at present afflicted with a strange malady; it is in the throes of a feverish intoxication; it is like a sick man writhing in pain; it is harassed and tortured by the burning fever of impiety.

But when God shall determine to put an end to these convulsive movements, what will He do? Will He raise up astute politicians and powerful rulers who will restrain as with fetters of iron the seething passions of men? No. Will He send profound philosophers and great orators to recall these peoples by eloquent speech and powerful reasoning to a sense of their duty? By no means. What, then, will He do? He will do what He has done in every age when He wished to heal the wounds of society and restore it to moral soundness. He will send apostles chosen for this special work, priests without name or reputation, but strong in strength of faith and holiness of life; these He will send, bearing a cross of wood into the midst of nations invaded and desolated by the demon of pride and the lust of greed and sensuality: *Go, ye swift angels, to a nation rent and torn in pieces, to a terrible people, to a nation expecting and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled.*[1] Thither will these apostolic men go, urged on by the Spirit of God. Error and vice will flee at the sight of them, and a purified land will bring forth a new generation of men, full of life and adorned with every virtue: *Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created: and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.*[2]

[1] Isaias xviii. 2. [2] Ps. ciii. 30.

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From what has been said weighty consequences follow.

Our Saviour in associating with Himself certain men to continue the work of redemption reserved to Himself the direct and immediate action on souls. He works through the priest, who is only His minister and instrument. If the instrument works according to the required conditions, its action is free and produces the desired effect. But if the instrument is corrupt and wicked, its action is impeded and produces no effect.

We know perfectly well that there are in the ministry of the priesthood actions and effects beyond nature and in no wise dependent upon the personal virtue or merit of the priest himself; and it is quite easy to see why this is.

In this world Jesus Christ has a triple birth: the first, physical and according to nature, in the womb of Mary; the second, mystical, but real, on our Altars; the third, spiritual and moral, in the hearts of the faithful.

The first of these He received from the most blessed Virgin, who is therefore rightly called the Mother of God. No other creature shares with Mary this august privilege.

The priest was especially set apart to give to Jesus Christ the other two births. One is effected on the Altar, by the words of consecration, the other in the souls of the faithful, by the administration of the sacraments.

In holy Mass it is Jesus Christ who, by the mouth of the priest, utters the words of consecration, and

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hence they invariably produce their effect, no matter what may be the moral disposition of the secondary agent. The same is true as regards the primary effects of the other sacraments, which produce grace *ex opere operato*, as theologians say. If it were otherwise, that is, if the sacraments had not an inherent virtue of their own and independent of those who administer them, who does not see that the fruit of redemption would be exposed to hazard, and that souls would be tortured with a horrible anxiety and with an apprehension for which there would be no remedy? But what a lax and tepid priest does not possess is that authority and empire over souls, that marvellous influence which constitutes the moral power of the priesthood, that gift of moving and converting hearts; and he does not possess these because they are the prerogative of virtue and the privilege of holiness. To be sure, God can give efficacy to words spoken by the unclean lips, and He does so at times, but this is an exception. The rule is this: the colaborers whom Jesus Christ has associated with Himself being free and intelligent, He has ordained that the effect produced should be proportioned to the perfection of the instrument employed. Hence it is that divine grace comes to souls more or less abundantly accordingly as the channel which transmits it is more or less pure and free from impediment.

If you wish to know how much good a priest can accomplish in the Church, you have only to examine how far he is willing to give up self in order that the spirit of Jesus Christ may enter into his heart and abide

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there. *Semper tibi displiceat quod es*, says St. Augustine. *Nam ubi tibi placuisti, ibi remansisti; si autem dixeris sufficit, et periisti. Semper adde, semper ambula, semper profice.*[1]

[1] Serm. XV. De Verb Apost.

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Section Second.

Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ in the Priest.

(1) The Study of Jesus Christ the means of complete knowledge in a priest.

(2) The Love of Jesus Christ the means of the highest perfection in a priest.

CHAPTER I.

THE STUDY OF JESUS CHRIST THE MEANS OF COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRIEST.

WHOSOEVER knows Jesus Christ possesses all knowledge; whosoever knows Him not is ignorant of all things, even though he may have mastered all that is taught in the academies of the learned. The Word-made-flesh is the sun of truth and the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; He is the unutterable secret of His heavenly Father, the mystery of His love that lay hidden during the ages that preceded His coming.

To study, to meditate upon, to contemplate unceasingly the Man-God, in whom are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, this is to elevate our thoughts, broaden our intelligence and begin here on earth the occupation

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of the angels and the saints in heaven, who never tire of dwelling upon the perfections of God the Saviour and looking up into His adorable countenance: *On whom the angels desire to look.*[1]

The study of Jesus Christ and meditation upon His mysteries should be the habitual occupation of a priest. Is it not indeed necessary that he should have a perfect knowledge of the Master whom he serves, whom he represents, and whom he preaches to others? If he does not wish to prove recreant to his mission, should not all his teachings centre upon Jesus Christ, who, as He Himself says, is the way, the truth and the life; the way, as St. Bernard interprets it, in which one must walk, the truth which one must acquire, and the life in which one must abide: *Ego sum via per quam eundum, veritas ad quam veniendum, et vita in qua permanendum;* or, as St. Augustine puts it: the way of my example, the truth of my promises, and the life of my reward—*via in exemplo, veritas in promisso, vita in præmio.*[2]

Of the things which alone it behooves us to know what more can the learned of the world teach us? I had acquired, says St. Augustine, much knowledge from books on philosophy; the system of the Platonists fairly carried me away; I was a master in my craft, and taught others all I had learned in their schools on the divinity and the nature of the Sovereign Good: *Garriebam plane quasi peritus.* But the foundations of it all were tottering systems, human inventions, dreams. I longed to turn to Thee, O my God. I sought how

[1] I. Peter i. 12. [2] Serm. II. De Ascen.

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I might reach Thee and possess Thee, but my efforts were futile until I decided to surrender myself to the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, the Man-God, blessed forever and forever: *Quærebam viam comparandi roboris, quod esset idoneum ad fruendum te; nec inveniebam donec amplecterer mediatorem Dei et hominum, hominem Christum Jesum, qui est super omnia Deus benedictus in sæcula.*[1]

Truth luminous and unveiled is the life of the blessed in heaven, but this vision our weak nature cannot support. Hence was the Word-made-flesh and transformed, as it were, into milk suitable to our condition of infancy: *Verbum caro factum est ut infantiæ meæ lactesceret sapientia tua per quam creasti omnia.*[2]

It is to Jesus Christ, therefore, that we must go for knowledge, for a knowledge suited to our capacity and adequate to our needs.

But will the Man-God reply to the priest who questions Him? Will He deal with the priest as a master deals with his pupil? No, this is an extraordinary privilege which may not be asked. But if Jesus Christ does not speak to the priest with His lips, He will speak to him by means of Holy Writ, by the voice of the Church, by the example of the Saints, and by the writings of the Fathers and Doctors. These are the masters to whom we are to listen and whose words we are to study if we wish to acquire that supereminent knowledge of which St. Paul speaks: *The charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge.*[3]

First of all, then, Holy Writ: *Search the Scriptures.*[4]

[1] Confess. vii. 18. [2] Ibid. [3] Eph. iii. 13. [4] John v. 39.

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From the first page to the last they speak to us of Jesus Christ. It is by His Word that God created the world: *All things were made by Him.*[1] When His divine hands formed the body of the first man, lovingly and complacently breathing into the clay the breath of life, He had before His eyes the Incarnate Word: *Adam, who is a figure of Him who was to come.*[2]

It was in view of the future merits of Jesus Christ that the Lord opened to guilty Adam and to all his posterity the treasures of His mercy. It was Jesus Christ for whose coming the Patriarchs prayed and yearned, whom the Prophets foretold from afar, and whom the figures of the Old Law typified and foreshadowed. In expectation of His coming all the creatures of the earth broke forth into sighs and yearnings.

The Four Gospels are the joyous witnesses of the fulfilment of these promises. In them the Man-God teaches us His heavenly doctrines, and the Epistles of St. Paul are their sublime commentary.

This is My beloved Son; hear Him, look upon Him, imitate Him, *ipsum audite*, is the sum and substance of Holy Writ.

The Church, illuminated and directed by the Spirit of God, so understands it. While waiting until it will be her privilege in the abode of the blessed to contemplate the splendors of the Divine Essence and the ineffable greatness of the Three Adorable Persons, she fixes her gaze in this valley of tears on the Man-God; she follows Him throughout His mortal life and dwells upon His mysteries. While only one feast, without an

[1] John i. 3. [2] Rom. v. 14.

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octave, is consecrated to the August and Ever-blessed Trinity, many are consecrated to the worship of the Man-God. The Birth of Jesus Christ, His Epiphany, His Passion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and the Feast of Corpus Christi,—all these great mysteries, one after another, are lovingly commemorated by her throughout the whole course of the year.

She wishes by all this to bring home to us that while the religions of earth and heaven are essentially one and the same, each differs from the other in the expression of its worship. In heaven the Angels and Saints and Jesus Christ Himself, as the first of the predestined, will go on celebrating unceasingly forever and ever the august feast in honor of the Adorable Trinity; while we wayfarers on earth and in a strange land must keep our eyes steadily fixed upon our heavenly Guide, who alone can lead us to the goal of our desires: *No man cometh to the Father but by Me.*[1] My humanity is the light of your path, said the Lord to Blessed Henry Suso, and My Passion is the gate through which you must enter: *Humanitas mea iter est quo pergatur; Passio mea ostium est per quod ingredi oportet.*[2]

The Breviary, which is the prayer-book of the priest, and which should be in his hands many times throughout the day,—of what does it speak if not of Jesus Christ and of the Saints who were His faithful imitators?

We recite the divine office day by day, we read there those magnificent passages from the writings of the Fathers of the Church about Jesus Christ, and day

[1] John xiv. 6. [2] Dialog. II.

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by day we see from the heroic deeds of the Saints how they understood His teachings; and yet we know so little of the science of the Man-God, of His humility and meekness, of His mortification, patience and sacrifice. The Cross itself which we have ever before our eyes; the Cross, that book which says all, which makes all clear and needs no commentary; that spectacle, so inspiring when contemplated in the light of faith—*grande spectaculum si spectet pietas;* the very Cross itself has not been able to dissipate our darkness and detach us from the vanities and illusions of the world. To how many priests could our Lord say as He said to Philip: *So long a time have I been with you and have you not known Me?*[1] because if they really knew Him, what could restrain them from publishing everywhere, fearlessly and confidently, His Law and the mysteries of His love? St. Paul knew only Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and yet see how he boldly enters Athens. In spite of his foreign accent, his rude and unpolished speech, putting aside all human respect, he presents himself before the learned men of the Areopagus, startles them, puts them to silence, and converts the ablest of them. St. Francis Xavier is preparing to set out to Japan to preach the Gospel; his friends endeavor to dissuade him by telling him he will find there learned bonzes skilled in dialectics and in all human knowledge, and that he will be constantly forced to engage in discussions with them. The man of God replied: "I fear them not; what can they know if they know not Jesus Christ?"

[1] John xiv. 9.

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The world is full of men to-day who have spent their lives in study, who have discussed all subjects, who dispute and never agree about the attributes of God, the nature of the Supreme Good, the duties of man and his future destiny. When these gifted gentlemen, who esteem themselves princes in knowledge and kings in intellect, have grown weary of wandering in the mists of error, to whom will they turn to seek a solution of the mysteries that harass them? To the priest who has the knowledge of Jesus Christ: *And the gentiles shall walk in Thy light, and kings in the brightness of Thy rising.*[1]

But to know and to make known to others the mysteries of the Incarnate Word the priest must study them in the spirit of humility and prayer, for only by the light of faith can he measure the height and the breadth and the depth of the mystery of a God who was born in poverty and died in ignominy. A proud intellect will spurn with scorn the startling paradox of a God, whose immensity fills worlds, being confined within the narrow limits of a crib and a Cross.

St. Augustine, as long as he remained a slave to sense and carnal reason, could not understand the Gospel; the awful abasement of the Man-God was for him an enigma that could not be explained, a doctrine that seemed absurd. And yet who does not know that St. Augustine was a stupendous genius who had sounded the depths of human knowledge and pagan philosophy? Yes, but he was an eagle who had gone astray and was wandering in space. Suddenly he was

[1] Is. lx. 3.

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touched by grace, illuminated by the light of faith and borne up to the heights of a supernatural life. What a change! The eagle spreads his wings and soars aloft. He could no longer live save in an atmosphere of faith. This same Augustine, who but awhile ago combated the mystery of God-made-man, could not now leave off meditating on it, and for years, day and night, he dwelt upon it with transports of love and gratitude.

For centuries and centuries the most gifted of men have made it the object of their thought and study, and have daily discovered in it new and sublime truths, and even eternity itself will not be long enough to exhaust this infinite ocean of knowledge and wonders.

To study, to preach and to make known Jesus Christ is therefore the great, the only mission of the priest. For what is his mission? To call all men to eternal life: *Now this is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*[1] What is his mission? To save sinners by applying to them the merits of Jesus Christ. And can those merits be fruitfully applied to those who know not the Author of their salvation? What, in fine, is his mission? To make perfect the just, and to lead them on in the path of virtue. And who is the pattern of all virtue, the great exemplar of the predestined, if not Jesus Christ? *Whom He foreknew He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son.*[2] But how can one copy a picture and reproduce the figures without attentively considering it and studying it in all its details?

[1] John xvii. 3. [2] Rom. viii. 29.

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This diligent study leads on little by little to love, for, as it is impossible to love what is not known, *ignoti nulla cupido*, so it is impossible not to love an object on which the eyes are constantly fixed, when we discover in it marvellous beauties and infinite perfections.

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CHAPTER II.

THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST THE MEANS OF THE HIGHEST PERFECTION IN A PRIEST. THIS PERFECTION IS OF THREE KINDS: A TENDER PIETY, AN UNFALTERING CONFIDENCE, AN HEROIC SACRIFICE.

1st. IT is a quality of love to make the one who possesses it ready and willing to suffer and endure sacrifice: *sine labore non vivitur in amore*, says the author of the Imitation. Love that shrinks from sacrifice is only a sham, says St. Gregory: *Ubi operari renuit amor non est.*

Perfect love seeks to imitate the object loved, to transform itself into its likeness, to empty itself into it, to live of its life, to be no longer distinct from it, to be one with it.

Such was the love which the Holy Ghost kindled in the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Before the coming of the Holy Ghost the Apostles did indeed love Our Lord, still they lacked the generous courage to follow Him up to Calvary and to the crucifixion; they loved Him well enough to leave home and country for His sake and to follow Him in a life of poverty and toil, but they were not yet heroes, although they bore to their Master that veneration and tenderness which constitute what is called piety.

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This tender affection is the first effect which divine love produces in the heart of the faithful priest. The closer he clings to our Lord, the more sensible this love becomes and the greater the disrelish he feels for all except Him. Those gatherings where one hears only the profane speech of the worldling and sees only an ostentatious display of vanity, those frivolous conversations and distracting diversions which turn our thoughts from God, inspire in him only feelings of aversion and a longing to get away.

What business has he in clubs and places of common resort where he would not be listened to if he attempted to speak of the things of faith, and where the only object of those who frequent them seems to be to indulge in exciting pleasures in order that God may be forgotten and His very name banished from their speech?

Formerly when this priest was accustomed to go into the world and mingle with its votaries, he felt on returning from it only a profound disgust, and the unrest of his soul was such that his life was saddened and embittered. Now that he finds his delight in being with his God, he enjoys a profound peace. This interior calm manifests itself exteriorly in the lineaments of his countenance, in the grace of his conversation, and in his affable and agreeable manners. Nothing could be more gentle and agreeable than the conversation of St. Francis de Sales, which led St. Vincent de Paul to remark, My God how lovable Thou must be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!

Who can disturb or frighten a faithful priest who is

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conscious that God is at his side to protect and defend him? *Si Deus pro nobis quis contra nos?*

2d. Hence a priest should have an unfaltering confidence in every circumstance of life, even in the midst of the greatest dangers. He should have an unfaltering confidence when assailed by temptation. We are encompassed by snares and pitfalls. Now it is the devil who ceaselessly dogs our steps, seeking to devour us; again, it is the flesh, which is ever rising in revolt against the spirit; again, it is the imagination, which makes terrible assaults upon us; again, it is the senses, those ever-open gates, through which the enemy strives to enter into the citadel of our soul and take it by storm. How many reasons I have for being uneasy and tortured with anxiety; what trials I must bear up against; what a tempest I must face! The heavens are overcast, not a star is to be seen, and a storm of passion is let loose upon me. My God, have I resisted as I should? Or have I given consent and surrendered to the enemy? Who is the priest who has not again and again asked himself this question? What am I to reply? How solve this terrible doubt?

Are you a dissipated, indolent, effeminate, sensuous priest for whom the world has more attraction than Jesus Christ and His love? If so, I would hesitate to reassure you. The devil surprised you when you were alone and unarmed. Is it not perhaps possible that you were vanquished in the conflict?

Are you a pious and fervent priest, and are the life and mysteries of Jesus Christ the habitual subject of your thought and meditation? If so, be not disturbed.

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The enemy came upon you suddenly like lightning from heaven, but he found you armed for the combat. The fury of the wind may beat upon the tree, but it stands erect because it is firmly rooted in the earth; but if it should fall, it will fall to the side towards which it is inclined.

Where were you, O Lord, during that frightful storm? asked St. Catherine of Siena, after a violent temptation. I was in your heart. What, in the midst of those filthy images, those abominable pictures? Did you take pleasure in them? asked Our Lord. Did you give consent? Ah, you know all, O Lord; you know that I would rather have suffered the most horrible death. Yes, but was it not I who gave you strength to overcome?

He should have an unfaltering confidence in the exercise of his sacred ministry.

We bear a burden formidable to the very Angels in heaven. How the thought should frighten and sober us! In the tribunal of penance especially, the sentence we pronounce may often be the deciding point in the salvation or loss of a soul. Knowledge is not a sufficient security against mistake. What assurance then can the priest have? Say to God: Lord, I have nothing in view but Thy glory, no ambition but to gain and save souls. Thou wilt not permit, since I am working under Thy orders and guided by Thy Spirit, that my ministry should become a snare to me and to my brethren.

He should have an unfaltering confidence regarding his own salvation. A priest who really loves Jesus

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Christ is loved by Him, and if so, why should he fear for his future? Will a loving father disinherit a dutiful and obedient son? A faithful priest says: Lord, I wish to dedicate all I am and have to Thy service and to work for Thy glory; as to my eternal welfare, I place it confidently in Thy hands.

Such are the effects which the love of Jesus Christ produces in the souls of all priests who do not drive from them the grace of God.

3d. But in great and magnanimous souls, who perfectly correspond with the inspirations of grace, the love of Jesus Christ imprints two characters, which have in every age distinguished apostolic men.

The first character is a love of humiliation and suffering. A priest of ordinary virtue endures patiently and with resignation trials common to every-day life, such as reverses, annoyances and sorrows. But a priest of heroic mould not only cheerfully endures these, he loves them and longs for them in order to grow daily more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Who is a better judge in such matters than the Eternal Wisdom Himself? What was His choice and His preference? *Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.*[1]

This yearning and thirst for suffering and humiliation make a generous soul cry out, as did St. Francis Xavier, *Amplius Domine, amplius*—greater crosses, greater afflictions, greater trials; or as St. John of the Cross said: *Domine pati et contemni pro te*—Lord, to suffer and be spurned for Thy sake.

[1] Heb. xii. 2.

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Such a priest, carried out of himself by the love of his Saviour, if two crowns were presented to him, the one of gold, the other of thorns, would not hesitate a moment in his choice, but, like St. Catherine of Siena, would eagerly seize the crown of thorns and place it securely upon his head. What greater blessing could come to him than to be the living image of His Master, to suffer with Him the cruelest of martyrdoms, and to be like Him despised and trodden under foot?

The second character of an apostolic man is an heroic spirit of sacrifice, which makes him forgetful of self and solicitous only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

When divine love so possesses the soul of a priest that, like St. Paul, he has only a yearning desire of being dissolved and being with Christ: *Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ*,[1] the sacrifice is possibly more beautiful than that of martyrdom itself, since such a soul is willing to have his exile prolonged in order still to combat and suffer for the love of God.

St. Ignatius said that if the choice had been given him to go straight to heaven at once or to remain on earth amidst the labors, fatigues and warfare of the Church, he would have preferred to live, even at the risk of losing his soul, provided he could thereby have been able to gain more souls to God. This was certainly heroism of the most sublime type, for in so speaking the Saint had not a thought of the glorious crown with which the Just Judge would assuredly reward the will to make so generous a sacrifice.

[1] Philip. i. 25.

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Hence a priest loves perfectly who loves only Jesus Christ and seeks no glory other than that of being united with Him, of growing into His likeness, cost what it may, of doing and enduring great things for His glory, in a word, of giving Him love for love.

Behold the Christian hero, the Saint, the Apostle, the man of God: *Tu vero, O homo Dei.*

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CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION.

I.

FROM what has been said in this First Consideration the following conclusions may be drawn.

The priesthood is:

(1) A Dignity of incomparable eminence.

The priesthood, says St. Isidore of Pelusium, *est medium quid inter humanam divinamque naturam.* When at the Altar, or in the tribunal of penance, or in the discharge of his other sacred functions, he is lifted to a height that is simply startling, for he exercises a divine power: *Sacerdotem esse miraculum stupendum, potestatem ineffabilem, cœlum attingere, cum Angelis versari, cum Deo familiariter agere.*

(2) A formidable burden: Far from inspiring the priest with thoughts of pride, the sublime dignity to which he is raised should, if rightly appreciated, cover him with confusion and fill his soul with a holy and wholesome fear. *Quanto quis in sede superiori locatus est,* says St. Gregory, *tanto in majori periculo versatur. Quanto quisque inter alios eminet gradu, tanto etiam emineat vita;* for otherwise, says the same Saint, *si altiorem et non meliorem esse delectat, non præmium*

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est sed præcipitium.[1] *Cui similes malos sacerdotes dixerim*, he says again, *nisi aquæ baptismatis, quæ peccata baptizatorum diluens, illos ad regnum cœleste mittit et ipsa postea in cloacas descendit.*[2]

(3) A toilsome ministry: *Honores videntur esse*, says St. John Chrysostom, *sed revera non sunt nisi ministeria.*[3] And St. Paul said the same: *For whereas I was free, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more.*[4] This is also the idea which Our Saviour gave of the priesthood to His Apostles: *The kings of the gentiles lord it over them, but you not so.*[5] St. Bernard, writing to the Head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to the Supreme Pontiff himself, tells him: *Tu præsis ut provideas, ut consulas, ut procures, ut serves; præsis ut prosis. Rectorem te posuerunt? Noli extolli; esto in illis quasi unus ex ipsis.*[6] *Cogita*, says St. Isidore of Pelusium, *non esse tribunitium quoddam turgidum, non regnum inflatum pompis et insolens, sed humile et pacatum ministerium.*[7] When God constitutes one the head of a family, what name does He give him? That of master? No, but that of servant. *A faithful and wise servant whom the Lord hath appointed over His family.*[8] And what duty does He impose upon him? That of a servant to his master: *To give them meat in season;* and if he discharges his duty carelessly, he will be severely punished: *Clerici officium si perfunctorie geritur nihil apud Deum miserius, tristius et damnabilius*, says St. Augustine.

[1] St. Greg. Epist. 41.
[2] Idem, Homil. 13 in Evangel.
[3] De Sacerd. III.
[4] I Cor. ix. 19.
[5] Luke xxii. 25–26.
[6] De Consid. Lib. III.
[7] De grad. hum. Ep. 42.
[8] Matt. xxiv. 45.

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(4) A calling which demands the greatest virtue: *Mundiores*, says St. Ambrose, *esse debent cæteris quia actores Dei sunt.*[1] St. John Chrysostom, frightened at the greatness of the priesthood and the holiness it demands, writes thus to his friend St. Basil, who was urging him to enter this holy state: *Necdum horrescis quod ad tale ministerium me nitebaris inducere, indutumque sordidis vestibus sacerdotum inferri dignitati, cum talem Christus a convivarum congregatione separaverit? Splendore vitæ totum illuminantis orbem fulgere debet animus sacerdotis.*[2]

It would be a great error, therefore, in a priest to say: I am not a monk and hence I am not bound to have that degree of perfection which befits one living in a cloister.

Could it be possible that our Saviour would have enjoined on all religious orders the obligation of being perfect, and would not have exacted as much of that order which is by preeminence His own, the order of the priesthood, of which He is Himself the founder? It is true all religious orders came into existence through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but the priesthood is Jesus Christ's own order, the order which He immediately instituted, the order of His ambassadors on earth, who speak in His name, act with His power, dispense His mysteries, preach His Gospel, consecrate and distribute His body, communicate His spirit, bind and loose souls by His authority, open and shut the gates of heaven.

The fact is the priesthood demands a matured per-

[1] In Epist. II. Sti. Pauli ad Timoth. [2] De Sacerd. Lib. VI. c. 3.

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fection. *Perfecti in virtutibus esse debent*, says St. Thomas, speaking of priests, from whom a higher perfection is required than from those who live the life of the cloister: *Ad quod requiritur*, he says again, *major sanctitas interior quam requirat etiam religionis status.*

From this again follows another series of consequences well calculated to frighten the tepid and indolent priest.

II.

Before drawing out these consequences let us set down a few principles.

Sanctity consists in charity *quæ est in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*, as the great Apostle says.

There are three kinds of sanctity: First, the sanctity of beginners, or that which every Christian has who possesses the first degree of justice and is free from mortal sin. Next, the sustained charity of faithful souls who have made some progress in holy living, and who struggle more or less earnestly day by day to go forward and perfect themselves in the supernatural virtues. Lastly, the consummate sanctity of the perfect, who, having wholly stripped themselves of the old man, have put on the new according to Jesus Christ.

The sanctity of beginners is not enough for the priest, because, if he has only this, he will be no better than the lowest grade of laymen. The consummate sanctity of the perfect is indeed very desirable, but it is not demanded; if it were, who would dare exercise

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the functions of the sacred ministry? But that which is demanded and sufficient to give confidence is that sustained and ever-growing sanctity which consists in applying ourselves seriously to the acquiring of the perfection proper to our state, and in a constant fidelity to grace in the midst of the temptations, contradictions and trials of life.

If you do not possess this degree of sanctity, what will be your condition?

(1) You will unite to the august character and sublime functions of the priesthood a tepid and listless life, thus creating an alliance at once shocking in itself and reprobated by Almighty God. He has made you His prime minister, He has entrusted to you His treasures and the best interests of His kingdom, and how can you be content to give Him only a divided heart and a beggarly service?

(2) By living such a life you will endure all of the sorrows and enjoy none of the consolations of the sacred ministry. Difficulties, crosses and contradictions will meet you at every step; and while these crosses are the joy and crown of a devoted priest, they will be for you only a yoke that frets and a burden that weighs you down, because by your own fault you will be deprived of the grace which would make your burden light and your yoke sweet. You will be cold towards God and He will be cold towards you, and this mutual coldness will make you still more listless and negligent in His service. You will hardly be able to drag one foot after another in the path which you yourself have sown with thorns, which you have made

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narrow and difficult and in which you stumble at every step.

(3) Your life will be a contradiction to every rule of theology and to every principle which the masters of the spiritual life give for the direction and guidance of souls. I well know that the special motive which the priest has for celebrating Mass is not the same as that which the simple faithful have for going to Holy Communion. But if frequent Communion is forbidden to laymen who do not seriously try to advance in virtue, how can a priest who is equally careless daily ascend the Altar without great misgiving?

(4) Instead of daily enriching by a generous service the crown which God is preparing for you in heaven, you will be heaping up by your many infidelities material for the fires of purgatory, and not unfrequently you will run the risk of losing your soul. An incipient sanctity or the sanctity of beginners is not inconsistent with an attachment to lesser or venial sin, but venial sin easily passes into mortal. And has a priest encompassed by so many dangers, rashly relying on his own strength, and incautiously walking along the edge of a precipice, a right to hope for those special graces which will prevent him from taking a false step and falling into the abyss?

(5) A layman who has doubts and misgivings of conscience, and knows his unworthiness, does not go to Holy Communion, lest he should run the risk of incurring the guilt of sacrilege. He first seeks a confessor and goes to confession. A priest may be called upon any moment of the day to exercise a ministry

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which presupposes and demands a state of grace, and morning by morning he celebrates the Holy Mysteries of the Altar. His habitual negligence betrays him into failings which are a source of anxiety and fear. An inner voice says to him: Go, cast yourself at the feet of your confessor. He goes and confesses regularly for a time; gradually he wearies of it; it becomes irksome and a burden; and he strives to quiet his fears by affecting to believe that the stings of a troubled conscience are the result of foolish scruples. In his own case he applies principles unknown to theology, and which he would not dare use in the case of others. In this state, with the full consciousness of his failings upon him, the gravity of which is at least doubtful, he goes up to the Altar; and the next day he goes up again, but now fully conscious that he is in mortal sin and that he has put the seal upon his own condemnation.

No, I mistake: there is yet a remedy, namely, sincere repentance and conversion; and this remedy will always be possible as long as God leaves in us the breath of life. But that this conversion may be real and efficacious in a priest, he must absolutely shake off that life of tepidity and negligence which has so nearly caused his utter ruin.

From all this it would seem the conclusion is clear that it is very difficult for a priest to find a middle way between continual progress and rapid decline, that is, between a life of fervor and a life of reprobation.

For, after all, is not the priest God's man, the minister of Jesus Christ, His representative on earth, another

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Jesus Christ? But if he will do absolutely nothing, if, while professing to serve God who has done so much for him, he lives a life of ease and negligence, is not this proof positive that he has no love for Him? And St. John says: *He that loveth not abideth in death.*[1]

The fervent priest, on the contrary, has learned the great law of love; he is holy because he loves; he is holy because he is loved by Holiness Itself: *He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.*[2] Every sacrifice he makes will be rewarded with a new grace, and he will go on from virtue to virtue until he is granted the privilege of seeing God who reigns in Sion, than whom there is none greater. I will end with the words of William of St. Thiery, spoken to his brethren: *Altissima est professio vestra. Cœlos transit, par Angelis est, angelicæ similis puritati. Non enim solum vovistis omnem sanctitatem, sed omnis sanctitatis perfectionem, et omnis consummationis finem. Non est vestrum circa communia præcepta languere, neque hoc solum attendere quæ præcipiat Deus, sed quid velit, probantes quæ sit voluntas Dei, et beneplacens et perfecta.*[3] *Aliorum est enim Deo servire, vestrum adhærere. Aliorum Deum credere, scire, amare, revereri; vestrum est sapere, intelligere, cognoscere, frui.*[4]

NOTE.

The priest is obliged by his calling to be holy, and more holy than the body of the faithful. He has also greater means than the ordinary faithful to acquire a high degree of sanctity. The priest has daily at hand four powerful means of sanctifica-

[1] I. John iii. 14. [2] John xiv. 21.
[3] Rom. xii. 2. [4] De Monte Dei, c. ii. n. 5.

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tion: 1st. Prayer; 2d. Examen of Conscience; 3d. The Divine Office; 4th. Above all the Celebration of the Holy Mass.

These are his daily exercises; if he discharges them with attention and devotion he will soon become a great saint.

I. Meditation.

(1) This should be the first occupation of the day.

Si orationem operi præmiseris, et surgens a lecto primorum motuum initia ab oratione duxeris, aditus peccato in animam non patebit. S. Ephrem, Serm. de orand. Deo.

Sine studio orationis, omnis religio est arida, imperfecta, et ad ruinam properans. S. Bonav. De prof. rel.

Prævenerunt oculi mei ad te diluculo, ut meditarer eloquia tua. Psalm cxviii. 148.

Consurge et lauda, et in principio vigiliarum effunde sicut aquam cor tuum ante conspectum Domini, leva ad eum manus tuas. Lament. ii. 19.

(2) On no account should we omit this exercise of piety because of weariness or aridity, or because, in spite of our best efforts, we do not seem to profit by it.

Quidquid ex me mihi deest, usurpo mihi ex visceribus Domini mei Jesu Christi, quoniam misericordiæ affluunt, nec desunt foramina quibus effluant. August in Man. 21.

Advocatum habemus apud patrem, et ipse est exoratio. . . . Orat in forma Dei, orat in forma servi, orat pro nobis, et oratur a nobis. Ut sacerdos noster orat pro nobis, orat in nobis ut caput nostrum, oratur a nobis ut Deus. Oramus ad illum, per illum, in illo, et discimus cum illo, et dicit nobiscum. S. August. in Psalm viii.

II. Examen of Conscience.

Villicus es, habes codicem in quo describas quotidianas expensas; sed antequam somnus obrepat, aperi hunc codicem, nempe conscientiam tuam, in quo describas quotidianas expensas: aperi hunc codicem, lege quæ in eo scripta sunt, ut debita solvas. Chrysost. hom. LXXIII, n. 4.

Discito tibi præesse, et vitam ordinare, mores componere, temetipsum judicare, et temetipsum accusare, sæpe etiam condemnare, nec impunitum dimittere. Bernard de vita solitar.

Sedeat judicans justitia, stet rea et temetipsum accusans conscientia. Ibid.

An ancient poet recommends this holy practice in the following verses:

Vir bonus et sapiens . . .
Judex ipse sui, totum se explorat ad unguem. . . .
Non prius in dulcem declinat lumina somnum,

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Omnia quam longi reputaverit acta diei;
Quæ prætergressus? quid gestum in tempore? quid non?
Cur isti facto decus abfuit, aut ratio illi?

Qui mihi prætentum? cur hæc sententia sedit,
Quam melius mutare fuit. . . .
Quid volui, quid nolle bonum foret? utile honesto
Cur malus antetuli? num dicto, aut denique vultu
Perstrictus quisquam? cur me natura magis, quam
Disciplina trahit? sic dicta et facta per omnia
Ingrediens, ortoque a vespere cuncta revolvens,
Offensus pravis, dat palman et præmia rectis.

Auson. Edyll. n. 6.

III. The Breviary.

St. Joseph of Cupertino, a Franciscan brother, was once asked by a bishop the best means to sanctify his clergy. "Get your priests," he replied, "to recite the divine office with attention and to celebrate Mass with devotion. These two exercises are enough to make them perfect."

What is the Breviary? It is an admirable compendium of all Christian truths; it is a magnificent picture in which, one by one, the mysteries of our faith come into view and the heroes it has produced; it is *the* Catholic prayer; the Synagogue, the Church on earth and the Church in heaven sing the same canticles; it is the eternal prayer: *Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the same forever.*[1]

In reciting the Breviary what do you do? You present yourself as one deputed by the whole Church to adore God, to praise Him, to give Him thanks, and to treat with Him of the eternal interests of souls: *Pro universo terrarum orbe legatus intercedit.*

And how should you recite the Breviary?

Digne attente et devote. Quid prodest strepitus verborum, says St. Augustine, *si cor est mutum?—Statue Jesum ad dexteram tuam, et Mariam ad sinistram, et omnes angelos in circuitu . . . et cum quibus nunc psallis in terra, spera te cantaturum in cœlis.* Thom. a Kempis.

Here is a distribution of the parts of the office which may aid piety by representing to the mind the Passion of Christ:

DE DIVERSIS OFFICII DIVINI PARTIBUS.

MATUTINA *ligat Christum, qui crimina solvit;*
PRIMA *replet sputis; causam dat* TERTIA *mortis;*
SEXTA *cruci nectit; latus ejus* NONA *bipertit;*
VESPERA *deponit; tumulo* COMPLETA *reponit.*

[1] Heb. xiii. 8.

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IV. Holy Mass.

Be angels at the Altar. If you have faith you will think nothing trivial which refers to the Holy Mass. The holy king Wenceslaus had so deep a reverence for the August Sacrifice that he cultivated, watered, gathered and prepared with his own hands the wheat and grapes which were to become the Bread of Angels and the Wine of Virgins.

Jesus who abides in our tabernacles, who offers Himself for us a sacrifice on the Altar, who gives Himself to us in Holy Communion, ought to be by preference the object of every priest's devotion and special love, and He would be if the priest really appreciated what his priesthood is.

We shall give further on some rules for worthily performing the *Great Action* to which all the ceremonies of Catholic worship are referred and to which they are coordinated.

Oratio ad Gratiam Sacerdotii Postulandam.

Domine Jesu, summe Sacerdos et Pontifex, semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis; qui cum essem parvulus in oculis meis, ex hominibus assumpsisti me, et pro hominibus constituisti me in iis, quæ sunt ad Deum, ut offeram dona et sacrificia pro peccatis, et condolere possim iis qui ignorant et errant: emenda, quæso, per sanguinem tuum, conscientiam meam ab operibus mortuis, ad serviendum Deo viventi, et sanctifica me in veritate, ut tibi confixus cruci immoler ipse supra sacrificium. Fac ut bonus dispensator multiformis gratiæ Dei, in membra tua illam administrans, impendam et superimpendar ipse pro animabus fratrum meorum, servorum tuorum: et concede ut te clarificem super terram et opus consummans, quod dedisti mihi ut faciam, ubi es tu et ego sim tecum, ut videam claritatem tuam, quam dedit tibi Pater, quia dilexit te ante constitutionem mundi, Qui vivis et regnas, etc. Ex Thesauro Sacerdot.

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Consideration Second.

THE PRIEST SHOULD REPRODUCE IN HIMSELF THE VIRTUES WHICH JESUS CHRIST PRACTISED IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE.

OBSERVATION.

GOD had created man to His image and likeness, but sin had so utterly disfigured this divine image that it had, in consequence, well-nigh disappeared from the face of the earth. It was appointed to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is the image of the Father, to restore it. The Son of God therefore became incarnate and took a body in order to reveal to us in His own Person the Divinity in a form that would appeal to the senses. But observe that it is the office of an image not only to make known the person it represents, his lineaments and form and all that is characteristic of him, but also to do him honor, to mutely speak his praises, to publish his perfections, and to gain for him admirers and friends.

The Son of God began in this way. For thirty years He was content to give glory to His Father in silence and retirement, in the obscurity of a hidden life. Then, at the appointed time, He set Himself to announce to the world, in accents sweet and eloquent, His Father's greatness and power, His goodness and mercy, and all His divine attributes.

What He did in His own Person He wished His ministers and representatives to continue. Fellow priests! before we set out to announce to the world the greatness and goodness of the Lord, His justice and mercy, we must, during our ecclesiastical novitiate, reform the image of God within us, and make it according to the pattern revealed to us at Nazareth.

A few years of training in the seminary are however, as a rule, not enough to produce in us all the lineaments of so complete and perfect a pattern. We must go back again and again to the study and practice of those humble and modest virtues of which Jesus Christ gave us the example in His hidden life, and which are the necessary groundwork of perfection in a priest.

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And first of all, what is it that so surprises and startles us in the Incarnation, the Birth, the Circumcision, and in all the mysteries of the holy Infancy of Our Saviour? Assuredly His humility: *He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.*[1] This abridged Word, to use an expression of St. Bernard, *verbum abbreviatum*, this Majesty in eclipse, this Omnipotence in chains, this greatness so marvellously abased, this life so precious, passed for thirty years in silence and retirement, in prayer and labor,—all this amazes us and fills us with admiration. Therefore it should be all profoundly studied and faithfully imitated by every priest. He should be, after the pattern of Jesus Christ:

An humble priest,
An obedient priest,
A priest separated from the world,
A priest of prayer,
A priest of labor and study.

These are the subjects of the Second Consideration.

Section First.

The Humble Priest.

We shall examine this subject under three heads, namely, THE NATURE OF HUMILITY, ITS DEGREES, ITS EFFECTS IN THE PRIEST.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS HUMILITY?

A MAN who wishes to build up within him the edifice of sanctity so that it will withstand the impetuous fury of the passions must set it upon a firm and secure foundation, and to do this he must dig down until he comes to the solid rock, and there lay the first stone.

[1] Philip. ii. 7.

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This rock is self-knowledge, which will lead him to pass judgment on himself, to put himself in his proper place, and to be humble.

Pride, which is the opposite of humility, is an exaggerated opinion of one's own excellence, raising one in his own estimation above his proper state and condition; it is a false judgment which distorts his duty to God and his relations to his fellow creatures, introducing everywhere confusion and disorder.

There are, then, in the world two schools contradictory in their principles, methods and ends. The one boldly proclaims the independence of the reason and teaches man his own self-sufficiency, assuring him that he has within himself the light to know the truth and the strength to practise it. It opens splendid colleges and magnificent universities, and invites the studious youth from all sides to enter there, promising the solution of all problems. This school fearlessly takes up every question, passes judgment upon all controversies, examines all creeds, analyzes all dogmas.

The other school comes before us in modest mien and humble exterior. The academy is an abandoned stable, and the tribune from which its teachings are proclaimed is first a manger and then a cross. Its teachings are in keeping with these lowly appointments. It says to man: You are fallen and degraded, there is within you only darkness, corruption and weakness; to illuminate the intellect, cleanse the heart and strengthen the will there is need of supernatural and divine aid.

We know of only these two schools. The one is

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founded on pride, and its head is Satan, the prince of rebels. The other is founded on humility, and its master is Jesus Christ, the teacher of little children and the humble of heart. The one has produced all the philosophers who have sown the seeds of doubt throughout the world, all the heretics who have devastated the Kingdom of Truth, and all the unbelievers who have undermined the convictions and weakened the beliefs of men. The other has produced martyrs who were aflame with faith, virgins who were pure of heart, doctors who were filled with the science of God, and saints whose lives have illuminated the world.

The first step towards wisdom is to thrust aside with horror that false philosophy which extols men in order thereby to drag them down to perdition; which begins in pride, leads to dishonor and ends in despair.

Christian philosophy follows quite a different course; it begins in humility and ends in glory; it abases men to nothing in order thereby to reestablish them in justice and truth.

If this philosophy were to stop here it would indeed have destroyed our pride, but we should be discouraged, weak and cast down. Humility is, however, only a point of departure. Once it has wrung from us a confession of our abjectness and nothingness, it hastens to take us by the hand and lead us into the presence of God, thus ennobling, perfecting and deifying us.

The method we shall follow in putting this fundamental lesson into practice will be the measure of the progress we shall make in the school of Jesus Christ.

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The saints and men of apostolic lives would never have reached so great a height of sanctity or performed works so wonderful, if they had not first thoroughly mastered and cheerfully practised this lesson, as their divine Master recommended them to do.

Indeed the Son of God when He came down from heaven to instruct men did not, as St. Augustine says, tell them to learn from Him to create worlds, to perform miracles, to heal the sick and call back the dead to life; on the contrary, He gave them this precept: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."

But why begin with humility? Because it is necessary to start with what is just and true. What is humility? It is a truthful judgment which we form of ourselves and which teaches us to measure our own excellence at its real worth. It is a virtue which enables us to know ourselves as we are, and which prevents us from ascribing to ourselves, or wishing others to do so, aught that is not rightly our due.

If, then, we discover that there is in us no good and no perfection, whether natural or supernatural, which we can properly call our own, humility will teach us that, since we ourselves are simply nothing, we must look to God as the source of all goodness and acknowledge that to Him is due all honor and glory.

Observe, however, that one cannot be said to be humble simply because he recognizes that he is himself nothing and that he possesses nothing that he can call his own. The philosophers of old recognized this much, and yet they were proud. The very conscious-

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ness of their own baseness and nothingness irritated and disgusted them.

> "*Unde superbit homo, cujus conceptio culpa,*
> *Nasci pœna, labor vita, necesse mori?*"

Humility is a virtue proper to Christianity and has its seat in the will. It disposes us to accept what we deserve and to do so cheerfully, because it is just that we should.

Hence we see that humility is a virtue that is founded on truth known, loved and joyfully embraced in all its consequences for the sake of order and justice.

We see also that in the measure in which a man is humble, just and holy, in the same measure is he perfect.

There are as many degrees in humility as there are in sanctity itself. We shall give three, which are, as it were, three stages in the way to perfection. When you have learned these three stages consider in which of them you are, and you will know the measure of your supernatural worth as a Christian and of your moral power as a priest.

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CHAPTER II.

THE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

First Degree.

THE sin of Adam consisted in saying: *I will not serve—non serviam.* This spirit of rebellion has been transmitted to all his children. Such is the sad condition of our fallen nature. As an effect of the original fall we are naturally enemies to law and authority.

Enter into yourself, question your own heart, and you will be convinced that of all your passions pride is the most imperious. It is this passion which poisons all the powers of your soul and penetrates, so to speak, into the very marrow of your bones. We are tempted to set ourselves up and make gods of ourselves, referring all things to ourselves, as if we were the centre and last end of all created things. Such is man as long as he remains shrouded in the darkness of sin and a slave to his passions.

But no sooner has divine grace enlightened his mind and touched his heart than he hastens to cast down this idol; he becomes conscious of his own nothingness, and recognizes that the first and most essential duty of a creature is to be subject to his Creator, to obey His commandments and to be firmly resolved to lose all

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things, to suffer all things rather than violate one of them in a grave matter—rather than outrage so holy and so great a Lord.

This disposition is the first degree of humility, and it consists in subjecting ourselves to God, from a love of order and justice, whenever He commands us to do so by virtue of His sovereign dominion over us. Whenever a Christian sees himself exposed to temptation and in danger of offending God mortally he ought to cry out with St. Paul: *Who shall separate me from the charity of Christ?*[1] Neither adversity, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor persecution, nor the sword, nor death. If he hesitates, he is no longer but the ghost of a Christian; he is dead and beyond the hope of salvation, and his lot forever will be with the demons and the reprobate.

Whosoever will persevere to the end in the determination to sacrifice all he has—his goods, his honor and his very life—rather than commit a single mortal sin, will be saved, because he has humbled himself and submitted to the authority of his sovereign Lord, and has given Him what is rigorously and essentially His due. He will therefore be numbered with the just.

If, however, he stops at this, that is, if he refuses to obey except when God absolutely commands him and thus only partially satisfies His justice, he will be a very imperfect Christian, and after death he will be obliged to suffer a long time in the cleansing fires of

[1] This exclamation of St. Paul was in him the spontaneous outburst of his heart, an expression of perfect charity. In the just man its motive is ordinarily the fear of losing the Supreme Good and of falling into the greatest of all evils.

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purgatory before being admitted into the presence of the Thrice Holy God.

But a priest who should content himself with this degree of perfection and stop short at this first stage would not lead a life such as his vocation demands. Of this there is no question. God wishes to make a priest His confidant, the depository of His graces and the steward of His house; but if instead the priest obstinately persists in taking his place among the menial servants and slaves, he may not indeed be an enemy, nor will I say that he is yet a scandal to the Church, but he will not be cordially received or highly esteemed by his Master, and his influence for good will be slight and often ineffectual.

A priest should therefore strive with the assistance of divine grace to reach at least the second degree of humility and Christian justice.

Second Degree.

This second degree consists in subjecting ourselves to our Creator with a deference so profound that we should be ready to suffer death rather than displease Him by deliberately committing the least venial sin. This degree is inconsistent with any longing for venial sin or attachment to it. Slight failings there will be because they are inseparable from human frailty. These, however, the heart and will alike reject. This disposition is far more perfect than the first.

The more we humble ourselves before God and submit ourselves to His divine will, the more nearly will

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we approach to an orderly, just and holy life. Do not in fact order and justice demand that a well-born son shall not give the least displeasure to the best of fathers, and that he shall not, even in the smallest matter, fail to pay him the respect due him? The least degree of God's glory is of incomparably more value than our life and than all the goods of this world, because God is the ultimate end of all things, and the end is always to be preferred to the means.

Now the glory of God, that is, His accidental glory, consists in this, that all creatures shall be wholly subject to Him and obey the slightest token of His will. How great, then, should be our horror of venial sin, which is rebellion against God and a robbery of His glory!

A minister of the Altar, who reaches this second stage of perfection and is solidly grounded in it, is not only a priest of regular life and irreproachable in the eyes of the world, but he is a pious and fervent priest, often conversing with God in prayer, and drawing from these intimate communications lights and graces which make fruitful his ministry among the faithful. To such priests is granted the grace to renew whole parishes, to rekindle the spirit of faith and piety, and to do with ordinary talents what others with all their gifts and knowledge will not be able to accomplish.

Still this is only the second degree and not the highest point to which dependence and humility may be carried.

He is indeed a just and holy man who generously makes a sacrifice of whatever may be directly opposed

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to the glory of God. Such a one is not, however, so entirely cut off from created things that he may not prize his good name and the esteem of the virtuous, and wish to enjoy certain innocent gratifications not displeasing to God.

Hence those who are content to remain in this second degree, without aspiring to rise higher, not unfrequently lapse into certain failings, as if by surprise, and into many imperfections inseparable from this state. Moreover, they let slip many occasions of practising greater virtue. God loves them and pours out upon them abundant favors, but He does not find in them that splendid generosity and prompt response to grace that would move Him to communicate to them the extraordinary gifts and singular privileges which He is pleased to grant to His more favored children.

There is then a more excellent path, namely, the third degree of humility, and this is the very height of evangelical perfection.

Third Degree.

Although the words, *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*,[1] are addressed to all priests, still the road which we are about to trace out will not be that of the greatest number. Even in perfection there are degrees. The heroism of sanctity is a special and singular gift, nevertheless we should try to know something about it, if for no other reason than as a motive of humility and that we may see by what an immense distance we are removed from it.

[1] Matt. v. 48.

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But give me one of those grand souls nurtured on profound meditation, one of those magnanimous priests who has sounded the depths of the science of the Cross, and he will readily understand what we are about to say.

The third degree of humility fills the faithful, generous soul with so great an aversion for the things of the world, so great a desire of being contemned, that if he were given the choice between being honored and despised by men, and if God would receive equal glory from either choice, trampling honor and the esteem of creatures under foot, he would accept ignominy and opprobrium as eagerly as the ambitious seek fame and glory, and he would do so for the twofold reason that he would thus grow in justice and make himself more like his Master, Jesus Christ.

This doctrine at first sight seems startling because it is so diametrically opposed to the maxims of the world and the judgments of men. How, it will be said, can one desire to be despised and to have others look down upon and spurn him?

I reply that we shall agree on this point once we thoroughly understand the definition of humility given above, that is, once we know ourselves perfectly and really love justice.

Tell me, O man, what are you? What would you merit if you got your deserts? Have you committed a single mortal sin in your life? If so, you have deserved hell and were like Satan.[1] Have you com-

[1] We speak here of sins considered numerically, not of their specific malice, for only God can estimate this aright.

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mitted two mortal sins? If so, you were more guilty than Satan, for he committed only one. Compare yourself, then, with Satan and the reprobate, and, from what you think is due them, ask what was due you. If you are not now actually in their society, to what do you owe it? To your own virtue? or rather to the wholly gratuitous mercy of the Divine Redeemer? *Tibi Domine justitia; nobis autem confusio.*

Let us suppose for a moment that we have had the singular good fortune and privilege to pass through the temptations of life without losing the grace of holy baptism. Will not even then the very thought of our baseness and daily shortcomings be sufficient to inspire us with a contempt of ourselves?

What are we by nature? Nothing. What can nothingness claim? Only to be forgotten, for we never think of what is not. What are we by our will? Nothing but sinners, rebelling against God, sometimes more, sometimes less guilty, but always rebelling. What do sin and rebellion merit? Only to be spurned and punished. Let us cast up accounts. Nothingness and sin, these are all we can call our own, these are our titles to ownership. To be spurned, forgotten, punished, these are the rights we have acquired. To me this reasoning seems clear.

St. Teresa once asked our Lord why of all the virtues He loved humility best. Because, He replied, I love truth.

When we read in the Epistles of St. Paul and the lives of the greatest saints that they regarded themselves as mere filth and as the offscourings of the earth;

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that they thought themselves unworthy to see the light of day; that they were amazed that God suffered them to live in His sight, and that all men did not heap reproach upon them and treat them contumeliously, we are inclined to suspect that such statements are pious exaggerations. But we must not forget that an exaggeration is a lie, and could God love and reward a liar?

No, the saints so humiliated themselves in order that they might be just, and they were pleasing and acceptable to God precisely because they rendered to Him the most exact and rigorous justice.

The humble man, says St. Bonaventure, loves truth and he cannot suffer himself to be praised, because he knows he does not deserve it; nay, more: he is content to be thought of as he is—as one who has nothing of his own save what is vile and despicable. This is the idea he has of himself, and it is the one he desires that others should entertain of him. He is as solicitous about this as we are that others should agree with us in our opinions and judgments. Every proud man is a liar and a usurper: this is why God has a horror of him and thrusts him aside with disdain.

Wonderful to say! To be great, holy and perfect in the sight of God what is required of us? This, and this only: that we be neither usurpers nor unjust. But, you will say, that is easy enough and is no more than is demanded of every upright man. Easy? You mistake, you deceive yourself; that is the very heroism of virtue. We have been so depraved by original sin that it is with the greatest effort we restrain ourselves

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from trenching on the rights and invading the domain of the Lord. Keep in your place, He says; be just, render to God what belongs to God, and to creatures what belongs to creatures, and you will be holy in My sight and I will give you to sit upon an immortal throne in My kingdom.

Very well, you will say, one must indeed be just; but how can we think of ourselves as little and mean and vile when we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that we have accomplished great things? Say rather: When God has accomplished great things through us. Then shall we admire the power and wisdom of the great God who has deigned with instruments so vile to work wonders so great.

Humility does not consist in not recognizing the gifts of God and His power in His works, but in ascribing the glory of them to ourselves. We have a perfect example of humility in the case of the Blessed Virgin. She not only avowed, or rather in the joy of her heart published abroad, the great and wonderful things God had wrought in her, but, in place of taking any of the glory of them to herself, she cried out: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me.*

It is just, it is supremely just, that all honor should be given to Him who is the Author of all good. When we take part of this honor to ourselves we are committing a fraud. This is an injustice done to God, and we should be as abashed and ashamed of being guilty of it as would an honorable man who might chance to be mistaken for another more distinguished than him-

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self or praised for some great deed which another had done.

Humility, then, is nothing more or less than simple justice; nothing more or less than truth openly avowed and honestly loved.

But over and above the love of justice there is still another powerful motive, another strong incentive which leads great souls to love to be humbled and contemned, and this is the example of their Divine Master.

The Word-made-flesh could not humble Himself in heaven, for He is the Son of God, equal in all things to His Father. He came down to earth and became man. As man He is inferior to His Father and could humble Himself. Hence it is that we see Him going to such extraordinary extremes, embracing all sorts of humiliations and contempt, descending to the very depths of abjection and annihilation: *He emptied Himself.*[1] He is born in a stable, the greater part of His life is passed in the shop of a tradesman, and in the end He dies on the Cross, overwhelmed with ignominy and opprobrium: *He shall be filled with reproaches,*[2] thus revealing by His abasement the greatness of God, before whose incomprehensible majesty all creatures, and even the Man-God Himself, should annihilate themselves.

What a lesson, what an example, what an incentive to a holy priest! And with all this and in spite of it the passion for some despicable creature so bewitches the heart and leads it captive, so influences the worldly, that they go the length of loving its very defects and

[1] Philip. ii. 7. [2] Lament. iii. 30.

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caprices, nay, even of imitating them and copying them into their own lives.

Do not the dissolute daily make painful sacrifices to please an idol of clay? This, it is said, is a blindness, a madness. Yes, but is not divine love capable of doing what profane love accomplishes; can it not exalt the soul and fill it with transports equally ardent and inspiring? Cannot a priest be so filled and intoxicated with love for his Saviour that he will rejoice and glory in being like Him and in being, as He was, despised and trodden under foot?

Exaggeration, transports of the indiscreet, the man of the world will say, or the priest who thinks as the worldling does. To both of these all this is the foolishness of the Cross of Christ, because both are ignorant of the cost of those humiliations with which the Man-God was clothed as with a livery.

Yes, they will insist, exaggerations, because such excessive humility enervates the soul and destroys all reliance on one's own strength.

How can a priest, they say, putting himself entirely out of sight and believing that he is simply nothing, ever hope to put forth such strength and energy as his toilsome mission demands?

We shall now reply to this objection, and we shall prove, on the contrary, that humility, and humility alone, will make men great and perfect and produce heroes and apostles.

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CHAPTER III.

THE EFFECTS OF HUMILITY IN THE PRIEST.

ASK the general run of the men of the world, those especially who make pretensions to be men of science and culture and who, in the excess of their admiration, fairly idolize the philosophers of Paganism, ask them what they mean by an humble Christian? They will tell you that he is a man of low and abject instincts, a man whose spirit is broken and incapable of generous aspiration, a man who lives in an atmosphere of obscurity and mysticism, a man, in short, whom devotion has robbed of every sentiment of dignity and who is destitute of the courage and energy necessary for the achievement of great and noble deeds.

This is how men of worldly minds pass judgment; but the exact contrary is the truth.

Would you know a proud and haughty man? He is one who is ever putting himself forward, ever talking about himself. To reach his ends he will not hesitate to fawn upon the great of the world and to worship their whims; he is a base flatterer of the multitude, and a very mendicant for its applause; he will descend to the vilest and most shameless intrigues to blacken and destroy a rival and raise himself upon the ruins of his

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character. A worshipper of himself, he despises every one else. His egotism narrows his heart and dwarfs and paralyzes all the powers of his soul. Never look to him for any generous sacrifice for the public good. To him sacrifice would have neither motive nor aim unless in some way it contributed to his personal profit or ministered to his vanity. Thus, carried away by his passions, at once the idolater and slave of those who lavish wealth and distribute honors, he sinks out of sight amid the exhalations of his pride, or, worse, he falls prostrate in the mire, to be spurned by men.

No, none but the humble maintain the true dignity of human nature. For whosoever considers the vision of God's greatness on the one hand, and on the other the nothingness of all else besides, will clearly see both the paltriness and baseness of those who make themselves dependent on the opinions of men, and the nobility and generosity of those great souls who put their trust in none but God.

The Christian, the truly humble priest, conscious of his own nothingness and misery, never loses sight of the greatness and goodness of God. Having nothing, absolutely nothing of his own, he ascribes nothing to himself. He knows well that God created him for His own glory; that He destined him for a noble end; and that by a gratuitous act of mercy He bestowed on him the privilege of being numbered among His sons. To these splendid prerogatives add the still greater one of the priesthood and it will be seen to what a sublime height the Christian, but above all the priest, has been elevated. Far from cringing at the feet of any vile

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creature, he would think it a degradation to obey an angel, aye, even a seraph, who would command him in his own name. A vassal, ennobled by his vassalage, he glories in God alone.

He knows, however, that the sovereign Lord has established here on earth a hierarchy of powers and has appointed certain means by which to transmit His decrees; that the divine will is made known to him by one who has received his commission from on high, and therefore when commanded he does not hesitate but promptly obeys and hurries away whither God calls. Neither does he take into account the personal qualities, the talents or the virtues of him who commands in the name of the Most High, but rather the authority of Him whom he represents. If the command of God's minister is not in opposition to that of God Himself, the humble and docile Christian is ever ready to bow his head and accept the yoke.

This, in short, is what dignifies and ennobles beyond the power of words to express that religious obedience which the ignorant or deluded affect to regard as a base servitude, while in reality it is the very sublimity of dignity and greatness.

Moreover, the truly humble priest never forgets that he was created by God and must go back to Him, and that, having been purchased by the blood of Christ, heaven is his eternal inheritance. Filled with thoughts so ennobling, he puts no store upon the things of this world and fears only its evils. A wayfarer of a day upon the earth, he leaves to the lovers of the vain and deceitful the laborious pursuit of honors, riches and

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pleasures. As for him, he has fixed his hopes on high and treads under foot the fleeting prizes of this life, thus freeing himself from every impediment that might check the holy aspirations of his generous and noble heart. His soul, set free from the things of earth, soars away in search of what is heavenly and immortal.

Search the annals of Christianity. Who are the men who have done most to honor the human race by the elevation of their character, their learning and virtue? Were they not precisely those who were most distinguished for their humility?

An humble man surely was that angel of the New Dispensation, the tender and ardent Augustine, and yet what a genius, how acute and penetrating his intellect, how sublime his thoughts, how profound his teachings, what a light he shed upon questions the most intricate and subjects the most difficult!

Incomparably humble was the Abbot of Clairvaux, that marvel of eloquence in a barbarous age, a man of strong character and of a robust and exalted genius. That he stood so far above the men of his time will not be surprising when we examine his works, which are still the admiration of scholars and thinkers and seem destined to endure for all time.

Another man of great humility was the amiable Francis de Sales, and yet his humility did not prevent him from doing honor to his country and his Church and to all mankind by his beautiful life, his attractive virtues, his exquisite writings.

Finally, what shall we say of a Vincent Ferrer or a Charles Borromeo, of a Vincent de Paul and innumer-

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able others? The great Apostle of the Indies, Francis Xavier, was humble, profoundly so, and who was ever more conspicuous for greatness of soul, magnanimity and generous heroism? The prodigies of his life, attested by clouds of witnesses, surpass the greatest marvels ever ascribed to the mythological heroes of antiquity.

These are the products of Christian humility, these the witnesses to its degrading and debasing influence on the human mind! Nay, more: humility was the very source whence the saints derived their power and greatness.

Pride puffs a man up, clouds his intellect, blinds him and robs him of the courage necessary for great and trying emergencies; while humility teaches him to kneel a suppliant at the feet of his sovereign Lord, and there prepare his soul to receive celestial favors—the light to know the divine will, and the strength to execute it.

We are nothing of ourselves, nor are we able to accomplish anything, but we have the means of making ourselves something by clinging to God and humbly protesting our impotence, for whosoever clings to God becomes one spirit with Him: *Qui adhæret Domino, unus spiritus est.* In this way we lift ourselves from the dust, becoming in a sense like unto God, strong in His strength, wise in His wisdom, and sharing His omnipotence.

On the other hand, God, to whom belong all honor and glory, resists the proud who dare put themselves in His place; He abandons them to their own weakness

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and nothingness; and, as a consequence, their works bear upon them the blight of sterility.

Glory belongs so essentially to God that He cannot share it with another: *I will not give My glory to another.*[1] Hence when He determines to do any great work on earth, He wishes that the power of His hand should alone be visible in it. The agents whom He selects to accomplish His designs are not those whom men judge best fitted to undertake great enterprises, for, if they were, a part of the glory of their success would go to them, whereas God reserves this exclusively to Himself.

Observe what took place after the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles. God, who is unchangeable in His counsels and ever the same, has at all times built upon nothing when He wished to carry out some important design. The Church herself, the most admirable of all His works, was built on no other foundation.

When Christ came upon earth there were in the world kings and emperors, famous orators and profound philosophers. What a powerful support to the cause of faith if they had consecrated to the Gospel their talents, their fame and the prestige of their name! But no; stand aside, ye men of science and genius, ye princes and arbiters of the world's destiny. The Lord will call you later on. You will come into the Church, but not until it is perfectly clear that she had no need of your services; your assistance is not required for the

[1] Isai. xlii. 8.

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conversion of the world; the Eternal Wisdom has other designs.

Do you see those poor fishermen mending their nets on the shores of Lake Genesareth? They are poor, ignorant men, without name or prestige, outcasts among their own people and the scorn of strangers. Yes, but they are precisely the instruments God finds fitted to accomplish great things.

Come, then, O Galileans, abandon your nets, because an immense work lies before you. This is nothing less than the conquest and, what is still more difficult of execution, the reformation of the whole world. But you will not subdue it or cleanse it from its impurities except by enduring hunger and thirst, calumnies and persecution, torture and death; so that even the blind will be forced to confess that this prodigy is not due to yourselves, but to the hand of the Omnipotent God who has made all things, and without whom nothing was made.

Point out, if you can, a single person in the whole history of the Church who has accomplished any great and enduring work for the glory of God with means suggested by human prudence or worldly wisdom.

What were those immortal founders of religious orders who renewed the world and peopled heaven with saints? What was a Benedict, a Dominic, a Francis of Assisi? Humble men and poor and destitute of means, long looked down upon as vile and despicable by the world, which is so slow to discern and appreciate merit and virtue.

O ye wise of the world, be ashamed and con-

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founded! How the judgments of God differ from the judgments of men! The presumption of the proud is folly and abomination in His sight.

Here is a priest who has received from heaven extraordinary talents and a splendid intellect; he should have rendered homage to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, by consecrating them to His glory. But instead he is a worshipper of self and confidently relies upon his own strength and powers. Presently God withdraws from him and leaves him to himself, and behold this great intellect, falling from so exalted an eminence, goes headlong from depth to depth into the most shameful excesses and the most inconceivable extravagances. What also is the history of philosophy and the history of every heresy, but the history of the fall and the aberrations of proud spirits?

No, I repeat again, only the humble can hope for the assistance of God, His support and protection. And hence only the humble are capable of executing great things in the supernatural order, and of raising up monuments that will survive revolutions and the overthrow of empires. In their undertakings they do not rely on their own strength, because they are conscious of their weakness and incapacity. But if God inspires them to do something for His glory, they throw themselves into the work with all their heart; difficulties do not daunt them; they feel that, though they themselves are weak and helpless, they are clothed with strength from on high, and are capable of moving worlds; they seek no praise and take no credit to themselves; they attribute to themselves only the imperfections and

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defects from which they know their works are not exempt; they give all the glory of their success to Him from whom they received the light to conceive and the strength to execute. It is then that God deigns to recognize the work as His own, and He not unfrequently countersigns it with the seal of immortality.

This explains why Christianity has been able to accomplish such marvels through the instrumentality of men who, in the judgment of the world, are simply worthless and despicable.

Looking into the depths of their hearts, God loved them tenderly; He made them the depositories of His omnipotence, and gave them a sort of dominion over the elements and all nature. He knew that His glory, of which He is jealous, was secure in their keeping, and that He ran no risk of compromising His authority by entrusting it to men dead to themselves, whose only ambition was to strip themselves of self and to consume themselves in His service.

Let us make an end. Humility in the creature is simply truth and justice, and this is why God loves it with a singular love: *For the Lord is high and looketh on the low.*[1] Humility is the standard of Jesus Christ: *Vexillum Christi humilitas.* It is only when fighting under this standard that we can hope for splendid conquests.

O God, Thou who art the greatness and the glory of the humble, make us understand that we shall be

[1] Psal. cxxxvii. 6.

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great in Thy sight only in the measure in which we are little in our own; that Thou art inaccessible to the proud, and approachable only by those who abase themselves before Thee. Grant that, by putting aside every low and sordid motive that springs from love of self, we may have no other intention than that of doing Thy pleasure, no other interest than that of giving glory to Thee, that thus, utterly forgetting ourselves, our whole being may be absorbed in Thee.

O Thou, the centre and stay of all things, draw us into Thy unity. Let all creatures pass from our sight, and let us forget our very selves forever. Do Thou alone, Thou alone, O Immortal King of the Ages, reign over all hearts. Cast down, destroy, utterly annihilate within us everything that springs from pride and love of self. After that tell us what to do, and Thou wilt find us instruments docile to Thy will, having no aim in our actions but Thy glory, because we shall have no motive to impel us in our toil but Thy love. Then shall we be able to accomplish great things, since Thy spirit, abiding in us, will lift us above the weakness of nature and communicate to us a strength and an energy all divine; then shall we be truly Thy ministers, Thy organs, and the instruments of Thy power.

Tota christianæ sapientiæ disciplina non in abundantia verbi, non in astutia disputandi, neque in appetitu laudis et gloriæ, sed in vera et voluntaria humilitate consistit, quam Dominus Jesus Christus ab utero matris usque ad supplicium crucis pro omni fortitudine et elegit et docuit. S. Leo, Serm. VII. De Epiph.

Fode in te fundamentum humilitatis, et pervenies ad

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fastigium charitatis. Vis capere celsitudinem Dei? cape prius humilitatem Christi. St. Bernard.

Attende, homo, quid fuisti ante ortum, et quid es ab ortu usque ad occasum, atque quid eris post hanc vitam. Profecto fuisti quod non eras; postea de vili materia in vilissimo panno involutus menstruali sanguine in utero materno fuisti nutritus. Tunica fuit pellis secundina: sic indutus et ornatus venisti ad nos. . . . Nihil enim aliud est homo quam sperma fœtidum, saccus stercorum et cibus verminum. Post hominem vermis, post vermen fœtor et horror. Sic in non hominem vertitur omnis homo. . . . Quid superbis, pulvis et cinis cujus conceptus culpa, nasci miseria, vivere pœna, mori angustia? S. Bern. in Meditat.

Unde huic jam extollentia oculorum? Unde levare caput? Ergo de sui cognitione, mater salutis humilitas oritur. (Idem, Sermo XXXVI.)

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CHAPTER IV.

THE OBEDIENT PRIEST.

OBEDIENCE is the first fruit and the necessary consequence of humility.

He was subject to them.[1] After the brief appearance of our Lord in Jerusalem when He was twelve years of age, the Evangelists do not make a single reference to Him until the beginning of His public life in His thirtieth year.

But these four words: *He was subject to them*, contain a great lesson which should be deeply meditated.

Who is He who obeys? He is one whose very essence is reason, and whose will is supremely wise and independent. He is the Word-made-flesh.

And here is another stupendous marvel. Three persons dwell in the holy house of Nazareth. Of these three who is it that commands? It is Joseph, a great saint no doubt, but incomparably less enlightened than the Blessed Virgin Mary, and between whom and Jesus there is an infinite distance. Still, with all that, Joseph commands and Jesus obeys, because He sees in Joseph, to whom was committed the office of watching over

[1] Luke ii. 51.

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and protecting Him during His infancy, the representative of His heavenly Father.

He obeys, and in what? He obeys every command that is given Him, and therefore His obedience extends to the most ordinary things and to the most humble occupations common to the homes of the poor.

He obeys, and for how long? For thirty long years; that is, not only during infancy, when His dependent condition would naturally seem to demand submission, but even in the maturity of manhood, when every one has the right to be his own master.

I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil,[1] said our Saviour. What is the great, the universal law of creation? It is the law of the subordination of all beings one to another, and their absolute dependence upon their sovereign Lord.

In the physical world there is a dependence of body upon body. The smaller are made for the greater, and the less for the more noble. There is a harmony among the celestial spheres and the bodies that move in space. The *Primum Mobile* gives the impulse. This is communicated from one body to the next and so on, and in this way the vast machinery of the universe moves in its appointed order.

There is a dependence in the moral and social world. There must be a head to every family, a general over every army, a monarch or other centre of authority in every State. If this were not so there would be confusion, anarchy and chaos.

The spiritual world, the supernatural world of grace,

[1] Matt. v. 17.

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is also a kingdom, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and invisible King. But in a visible society there must be a visible head and visible superiors. Jesus Christ appointed in His stead Peter as the universal ruler of His Church: *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.*[1] He also appointed bishops in His Church, dependent upon Peter or upon the Pope, Peter's successor, with the duty of looking after a determinate portion of His flock and governing a diocese, *whom He placed bishops to rule the Church of God;*[2] and dependent again on the bishops, He instituted priests and inferior ministers to exercise over the faithful an authority and jurisdiction whose limits are fixed by him who sends them. In no sense is man the origin and source of authority; he is simply a medium, an instrument, a channel which transmits what it has received. Authority comes from Heaven, and it must be obeyed as an ordinance from God Himself, no matter to whom or in what measure it applies or who may be the agent who exercises it.

This chain or relation, this subordination of rank to rank, constitutes the hierarchy of the Church and is her beauty and her strength.

In the physical world the subordination is not voluntary; it is ordained of God. He is the sole principle of motion; material beings receive their impulse from Him and obey by a law of necessity, and there is therefore no merit in their obedience.

In the moral and social world the subordination and dependence are also in the order of nature and decreed

[1] Matt. xvi. 18. [2] Acts xx. 28.

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by God, but those who are subordinate and dependent act, not on compulsion, but as free agents. Once we submit to an exercise of legitimate authority we do a virtuous deed because we gain a victory over ourselves: *Dum alienæ voci humiliter subdimur*, says St. Gregory, *nosmetipsos in corde superamus.*

The moral worth of our obedience is in proportion to the hardship which the sacrifice of obeying imposes upon our pride and sensuality. This explains what St. Gregory says, that obedience is better than sacrifice: *Obedientia victimis jure præponitur, quia per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam vero voluntas propria mactatur.*[1]

There are some in these days who loudly lament the spirit of insubordination and revolt which has disturbed the peace of States and carried confusion into all the relations of society. But how could it be otherwise? The recognition of God and His providence has been banished from the world, and man wishes to rule in his own name. There is therefore no legitimate claim to obedience, since a rational being owes subjection only to the Supreme Intelligence from whom he derives his existence. Whenever a finite rational being claims in his own right to exercise authority over another finite rational being, he is thereby guilty of usurpation and tyranny.

Restore to God the government of human affairs, and forthwith the hierarchical order will be reestablished and harmony will reappear. God is *the* Ruler, and every superior within the sphere of the jurisdiction assigned him by the Supreme Monarch is only His

[1] Ult. Mor. 10.

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instrument. *They have not rejected thee, but Me,*[1] said the Lord to Samuel.

It is, however, preeminently in the Church, the spiritual society established to provide for the interior perfection of souls, that the excellence and nobility of obedience are especially manifest. When the Heavenly Father designated from the heights of Thabor Him to whom men should listen, saying: *Hear ye Him,*[2] He pointed out, not the Son of Mary, but His own Son, His own beloved Son, equal in all things to Himself, and the object of His complacent love, saying: *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* When Jesus Christ governs His Church and gives commands unto men, His humanity disappears and His divinity alone acts. The same is true of Pope or bishop or other superior in his exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction: the man disappears and his personality is as it were annihilated; it is the Son of God who speaks and gives His commands through the medium of man. Hence it is that obedience has no value unless raised by its motive to the dignity of a supernatural virtue.

From all this we can readily understand what should be the motive and what the measure of our obedience.

Let us suppose that a superior, no matter who, gives a command. Is the command clearly unjust? If so, it is not God but man who has spoken, for God cannot contradict Himself. In this case God should be obeyed rather than man.

[1] I. Kings viii. 7. [2] Matt. xvii. 5.

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If there is a doubt as to the lawfulness of the command, the first duty is to obey, since the presumption is always on the side of authority.

The command given me is clearly not unjust, but I foresee serious embarrassments and dangerous consequences. In this case it is allowable to respectfully submit these difficulties, and if the representation is not well received, the command should be obeyed. The future consequences will affect the superior, since the responsibility of an action is ascribed, not to the hand that executes, but to the head that commands.

The command is just and right, but it imposes duties that are at once humiliating and burdensome. In this case you should obey promptly; generously overcoming self, because the more you humble yourself, and the greater sacrifices you make in discharging the duties assigned you, so much the more meritorious and pleasing will be your submission in the sight of God.

GOD commands through the superior. This may indeed be an ignorant man; he may have his defects, his manners may be rude and his character repellent. Well, he will be responsible for all that. The Gospel itself, even when announced by a wicked priest, does not cease on that account to be the Word of God.

GOD commands through the superior. Now, if God should visibly appear and speak as He did on Mount Sinai, giving His orders, making disciplinary regulations, and assigning to each his duty, would you dare criticise or censure His acts?

GOD commands through the superior. To forcibly bring home this truth it would seem that God has been

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more severe in punishing a lack of proper respect towards superiors than insults aimed directly at Himself. Aaron by a cowardly connivance suffered the people to lapse into idolatry, and yet no visible chastisement was visited upon him for his sin. Mary, the sister of Moses, speaks, not against Moses himself, but against his wife. What is this Egyptian doing here? What need have we of her? She rules supreme. This was an indirect attack upon the authority of Moses. But what happens? Moses, who had been in a sense God's arbiter; who, so to speak, had forced Him to grant pardon and had snatched the thunderbolt from His hands, prostrate before the Tabernacle, pleaded in vain for forgiveness for his own sister. No, said the Lord, I will not grant pardon; let her be ignominiously driven out of the camp and covered with a shameful leprosy; thus shall she expiate her insolent murmurings.

Such teaching, it may be said, will justify arbitrary power and in a sense make Godlike the very defects of a superior. But is there not a tribunal where superiors will have to give a rigorous account of their ministry? In the mean time God will make their imperfections and even their passions serve for the carrying out of His wise purposes.

You have a superior from whom, because of his harsh character, you have much to endure. So much the better. Make use of this trial to acquire sturdy virtue.

Again, your superior is a man of fastidious tastes, difficult of approach. Possibly it may be God's pur-

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pose to take this means of warning you against defects, which some day, when to you shall be committed the dangerous office of guiding others, it will be your duty to correct or avoid.

But my superior is unjustly prejudiced; he is misinformed; he is deceived: of this I am quite certain. That is quite possible, still there is a God in heaven who sees and knows all, and who makes use even of the errors and passions of men to lead you along the way which He has providentially marked out for you. The command comes from heaven, and to heaven your obedience must be referred if it is to take on the character of a Christian virtue at once supernatural and meritorious: *An obedient man shall speak of victory.*[1]

Still I have good reasons for not obeying. Ah! I very much fear you have not profited at the school of Nazareth, where Jesus Christ aimed to teach us, not to reason, but to obey: *Christ was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*[2] *Disce, homo obedire: disce, pulvis, obtemperare. De auctore tuo loquens Evangelista: Et erat, inquit, subditus illis. Erubesce, superbe cinis! Deus se humiliat, et tu te exaltas! Deus se hominibus subdit; et tu dominari gestiens hominibus, tuo te præponis auctori!*[3]

As for me, says another ecclesiastic, I find no difficulty in obeying; my superiors are excellent men; they always act prudently and I could not think of opposing their will. You obey, that is, you materially do what is commanded, but your obedience is that of

[1] Prov. xxi. 28. [2] Philip. ii. 12.
[3] S. Bern. Homil. I de laud V. M.

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a mercenary. You obey because you find a pleasure in it, or because the work is congenial; or you obey from natural taste, or inclination, or at best because you are convinced it is the proper thing for you to do. There may be in such obedience a certain moral excellence, but there is in it nothing of the supernatural, nothing that will merit heaven. You obey, but you do so to please your superior, to gain his good will and to secure favors. Your bishop, who could not read your heart, thinking that you acted from the purest motives, conferred upon you an honorable office, a position of eminence, and now you are a parish priest or a dean or a canon: *You have received your reward.*[1]

For thirty years was Jesus obedient in order to convince us that one who has never learned to obey will never know how to rule; and that a priest above and beyond every one else should, by a long discipline of submission, be so stript of self and his own will that, when he is set to rule a parish, he will by his sanctity and humility make his authority respected and lead others to submit to it as to an expression of the divine will.

[1] Matt. vi. 2.

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Section Second.

CHAPTER ONE.

THE PRIEST A MAN OF RETIREMENT AND RECOLLECTION.

FOR thirty years did Jesus Christ live in retirement at Nazareth to teach the priest that he should live apart from the world, and that, if he does not, he will lose the spirit of his vocation, expose his virtue to danger and compromise the success of his ministry.

I.

The Worldly Priest will Lose the Spirit of His Vocation.

What is the first consequence of a calling to the ecclesiastical state? To separate us from the world and to consecrate us to God: *The God of Israel hath separated you from all the people*,[1] said Moses to the priests of Aaron. And did not our Saviour Himself say to His Apostles: *You are not of the world, for I have chosen you out of the world.*[2] As the character which we receive in ordination can never be effaced, so neither should the promise to give up the world, implied in ordination, ever be broken.

[1] Levit. xx. 24. [2] John xv. 19.

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All this the faithful know wonderfully well. They well know that a priest should not entangle himself in the affairs of the world and its intrigues; that he should not love the world or speak its language, or make its maxims his own, or share its diversions and pastimes: they know, in a word, that he should be dead to the world and should be able to say with St. Paul: *The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*[1]

It is indeed true that a priest is not to pass his life in a desert or in a monastery. His office is to teach men and to sanctify them, and to do this he must live in their midst and in contact with them.

Neither can any good come of a priest encouraging the impression that he is rude or inaccessible or unable to converse with well-informed and cultured men, even when he does so on the pretext of holding himself aloof from the distractions of the world about him. Moreover, by so acting he remains completely ignorant of the tendencies and wants of his age. Nor will he be pardoned if he is ignorant of the proprieties of social life and the ordinary usages of good breeding, or if he is rude and boorish in the company of distinguished and cultivated persons.

But still less will he be pardoned if he is looked upon as one fond of the world and its vanities, as one who glories in his knowledge of the world, which is only another name for pride and sensuality, and who is ignorant of the science of Jesus Christ, which teaches humility and charity.

What respect can be had for priests who, instead of

[1] Galat. vi. 14.

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fleeing from the world, are frequently more given up to it than laymen themselves? for priests who squander much of their time in the society of worldlings, in playing games, in endless visits, in places where God never enters, where His name is never mentioned, where He could never be found, and where His presence and His grace are often lost?

It cannot be denied that a priest who worships idols, which he should cast down and tread under foot, and who by his life contradicts his teaching, betrays his calling and, instead of edifying others, becomes himself a scandal.

Who are the priests to whom even the world cannot refuse its esteem and confidence? Are they not precisely those who hold themselves furthest aloof from its vanity and dissipation, and refuse to share in its feasts and diversions?

Such priests fully realize that those who are called to their state should be grave and serious men. They are never seen meddling in other people's business; they live in retirement and silence; they are not anxious to get news, rather they prefer not to know many things which would serve no purpose except to gratify curiosity; they avoid encumbering their memory and burdening their mind with the silly stories and gossip of the world, while their holy faith furnishes them with so many sublime truths on which they can occupy their thoughts with profit and pleasure. In all this they but imitate our Blessed Mother, of whom St. Ambrose beautifully says: She sought no companionship except that of her own thoughts, and she

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was never less alone than when she seemed alone: *Comites non desiderabat, quæ bonas comites cogitationes habebat.*[1]

Some words of Plato taken from Theoderet are very much to the purpose here, and are at once a lesson and a reproach to worldly and dissipated priests.

"How think you," says this Pagan author, "are great and perfect philosophers formed? How do they occupy their minds? What are their thoughts, their aspirations? Listen; I will tell you. They know not the way to the Public Square or the palace. Neither do they know where the Council Chamber is or other places in which public assemblies are held. They are never at pains to find out who will be promoted to this dignity or that employment, or who will receive the suffrages of the people and become popular idols. They are ignorant, and wish to be ignorant, of the news of cities. They avoid banquets, clubs and reunions. Their bodies alone dwell in cities, while their souls, spurning the things about them as unworthy of them and freeing themselves from all impediments, go forth from their prison unhampered and joyous to seek out and contemplate great and sublime truths."

Hence, according to the judgment of the ancients, those who wish to give themselves up to the contemplation of the wonders of nature should begin by cutting themselves off from the world and isolating themselves from the multitude.

How much more necessary, then, is it for priests to separate themselves from the world, since their entire

[1] Lib. II de Virg.

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lives should be spent in meditating upon the eternal truths and mysteries of divine love? Oh, if you would only enter into yourselves, and give to God those thoughts, those desires, those affections which are squandered and dissipated on creatures; if you would only spend in holy converse with God the time which you waste in the company of men, what a treasure of grace you would accumulate in a short space of time!

Would you know why you are so tepid, so cold, so languid in the discharge of the duties of your sublime calling? why the Son of God so rarely comes to you with His lights and consolations? It is because you are always in the world, and the world is constantly in your thoughts and fills your imagination; because you are always in company and sometimes alone with another who is a peril to you; because the Son of God loves silence, solitude and recollection, and you are ever in the midst of excitement, noise and tumult.

But a priest must not only be separated from the world, he must be dedicated to God. Moses said to the priests of Aaron: *God hath separated you from all the people and joined you to Himself that you might serve Him in the service of the Tabernacle and minister to Him.*[1] And St. Paul says of himself: *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, separated unto the Gospel of God.*[2]

All Christians are consecrated to the August Trinity in baptism, but over and above this general consecration the priest receives in ordination a special anointing, by which he is set apart and distinguished as a vessel

[1] Numb. xvi. 9. [2] Rom. i. 1.

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of honor, and dedicated to the service and glory of the most Holy God.

And what obligation does this consecration lay upon you? *Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord. Be ye holy, because I am holy.*[1] And again: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God,*[2] in order, says St. Ambrose, that the life may be fitting the dignity.

Ut nomen congruat actioni, actio correspondeat nomini, ne sit nomen inane, et crimen immane; ne sit honor sublimis, et vita deformis; ne sit deifica professio, et illicita actio.[3]

A man gives up the world and dedicates himself to God by a religious profession; this is also a kind of consecration. But such a one is not required to be a saintly man from the very moment he enters religion; it is sufficient if he has a real desire to become holy and sets honestly to work to make himself so. But in a priest sanctity must be, not a matter of desire, but a fact, because he is sent by the Church to guide the flock more by the light of his example than by the exercise of his authority, being made a *pattern of the flock from the heart.*[4] Hence his soul should be holy, by being detached from all things of earth; his body should be holy, by being pure as the Angels in Heaven; he should hold his senses in check with the curb of mortification, and adorn himself with modesty as with a garment; his thoughts should be holy and his affec-

[1] Isai. lii. 11. [2] I. Cor. iv. 1.
[3] De Dignit. Sacerd. [4] I. Peter v. 3.

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tions, thus conforming himself in all things to his model, Jesus Christ, of whose Person he is the living representative.

If he possesses this interior sanctity it will manifest itself in the exercise of his august functions, and all will recognize in him the *man of God.*

One day the Emperor Valens, a persecutor of the Church, entered with his guard into an assembly where the faithful were gathered together celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany. The singing of the Psalms, the sight of so many people recollected and in respectful posture, the priests seeming more like Angels than men, and the bishop, St. Basil, motionless at the foot of the Altar, his gaze fixed and his soul united with God—all this so affected the Emperor that his soul was stricken with religious terror. At the offertory he presented himself according to custom to offer bread, but no priest advanced to receive it. He was seized with fright, reeled and would have fallen to the ground, had he not been supported by one who came to his aid, so great was the fear and remorse with which the spirit of piety manifest in that assembly, and, above all, the sanctity visible in the ministers of the Altar, inspired that guilty soul.

St. Basil was one of the greatest orators of his age, and could give a magnificent discourse on the Real Presence. But would the best of discourses have made on Valens an impression as vivid and profound as did the respectful attitude and recollection of the holy Bishop?

The faithful have a marvellous faculty for discovering

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the impress of sanctity in a priest, and for distinguishing a holy from an unholy minister. Silence and modesty in church, a grave and chastened deportment in all the functions of the sacred ministry, a simple genuflection before the Altar, a look, even a matter of seemingly no consequence, is for them enough on which to base a judgment.

When St. Vincent de Paul celebrated Holy Mass his expression was one of so living a faith and so tender a piety, that the very sight of him inspired the bystanders with devotion, and more than once in seeing him they would utter these artless and significant words: My God, there is a priest who celebrates Holy Mass properly; he must be a saint.

St. Vincent was truly a man of retirement and recollection.

II.

The Worldly Priest Exposes His Virtue to Danger.

If a priest goes among seculars only at rare intervals, that is, when his duty really calls him, his coming will always inspire respect, and no one will dare in his presence to dispense with the most rigorous proprieties.

This is not true in the case of a priest whom men are accustomed to meet frequently in their clubs or at evening parties. In their eyes he who habitually sits down among them is no longer a man of God, but a companion who shares their diversions and pleasures, an ordinary friend in whose presence there is no need of showing any special deference.

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Now, when men of the world come together and freely exchange thoughts, of what do they speak? What is the subject of their conversation? They speak of their business, of their interests, of schemes for making money, of ambitious projects. They praise the talent and the daring of those who have successfully carried out great enterprises, and who in a short time have accumulated vast fortunes. They speak of their diversions and of their pleasures, and not unfrequently of indelicate subjects, of their scandals and their intrigues. What, then, is the priest to do in such company? Will he undertake to interject into this worldly, not to say unbecoming, conversation a word concerning God and eternity? He is himself painfully aware that this is not the time nor the place to turn preacher, for his companions might say to him: If our conversation is not agreeable to you why do you stay here? Thus he finds himself constrained to approve by his presence and his silence language which, whatever else it may be, is assuredly not Christian. Being unable for a single instant to lift up to Heaven the minds of those men who think only of the earth and value only the goods of earth, he is himself dragged down to their level and back again to that world which he formally renounced and spurned, but which he now discovers that he still loves. Formerly, when the thoughts of faith exerted a strong influence over his mind and heart, he could not witness without being saddened by the sight the blindness of so many who eagerly go in quest of temporal goods and wholly neglect the interests of eternity. Now, however, such conduct does

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not seem to him quite so irrational. The atmosphere of the world, which he has been breathing day after day, has wrought upon him a deplorable fascination, and it is quite possible that by and bye he will make his own the illusions and follies of those whom he was sent to heal: *Quot sunt qui tanquam ardentes lampades et mundi luminaria lucebant coram hominibus, et paulatim ex frequenti sæcularium conversatione et confabulatione tepefacti, ad pristina opera sæcularis vitæ miserabiliter redierunt.*[1]

The worldly priest is exposed to another and a still more serious danger, namely, danger to his chastity. He often finds himself in the company of persons of the other sex. St. Jerome says that a woman is a burning flame, that man is straw ever ready to take fire, and that the devil is like a tempestuous wind, kindling by his breath in the heart of the one or the other the spark of impure love. *Fœmina ignis, vir stupa, diabolus flabellum est.* And St. Augustine: *Ibi quotidiana est pugna et rara victoria.*[2] *Hujus prælii nunquam fuit victor*, adds St. Jerome, *nisi fugiens.* Hence he recommends flight to Nepotian as the only safeguard to his virtue: *Memento*, he says to him, *quod ejecerit mulier de possessione sua Paridisi colonum et quod nulla securitas sit vicino serpenti dormire.* And again: *Quid tibi necesse est in ea domo versari, in qua necesse habes quotidie vincere aut perire?*

Nothing is further from my thoughts than to say a word here in disparagement of woman. Like ourselves

[1] S. Laur. Justin. de Discp. et Profect xii.
[2] Serm. de temp.

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she was created in the image and likeness of God, she was redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and from a woman was born the Saviour of the world. Let us respect woman, but not look upon her except at a distance. Water in itself is good and so is clay, but a mixture of the two is not always desirable. A priest is called the salt of the earth. Salt is obtained from water; bring it in contact with water and it is dissolved: *Sal ex aqua factum est, si appropinquet aquæ, solvitur. Homo ex muliere factus est, si appropinquet mulieri, solvitur et ipse.*

St. Basil prescribes this rule for all ministers of the Sanctuary: *Neque ad eas accedendum nisi cum gravissima nos aliqua ad eas necessitas impellat. Atque etiam ubi nos necessitas adigerit, ab ipsis non secus atque ab igne cavendum est, adeo, ut quam ocissime nulla mora, ab istis nos excitemus.*[1]

For many priests these entangling relations have been the cause of a troubled conscience, of fierce temptations and at times of deadly wounds.

Giving to this subject a wider application, we may say that a priest has nothing to gain and everything to lose by constant association with people of the world. Even if he should not be so unfortunate as to be guilty of some deplorable excess or lamentable fall, he at least loses his time, a loss which is simply immense and irreparable, for this time is not his to squander, it is stolen from his parishioners, to whose interest it should be wholly devoted. Nay, more: he loses the spirit of recollection and prayer, so essential to the

[1] Consit. Monast. C. III.

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worthy discharge of his priestly functions, and he loses the esteem and confidence of the people, thus seriously compromising the success of his ministry.

III.

A Worldly Priest Compromises the Success of His Ministry.

St. Gregory the Great, writing of the prophet Samuel, says: *Raro videbatur in civitate, videlicet tarde veniens et cito recedens.* He wishes the priest to follow the same rule: *Raro sit in publico frequens in secreto, ut qui tardius aspicitur, devotius revereatur.*[1]

Ea est mens humana, says St. Maximus of Tyre, *ut quæ exposita sunt, minoris faciat; quæ abstrusa, vehementer admiretur.*

St. Peter Damian compares ecclesiastics to a picture. A picture is admired, he says, provided it is not brought too close to the eye. When looked at from a distance the objects seem so faithfully reproduced that it is difficult to distinguish the copy from the original; while if the picture is brought too close the illusion vanishes. Instead of those delicate shadings which so charm the beholder, you see only a mass of color laid thick on the canvas, outlines formed by heavy strokes of the brush and figures without grace or beauty. The same thing happens in the case of priests. They are esteemed and venerated when they are seen at a distance engaged in the duties of their holy office. They are then regarded as the represen-

[1] In sua Reg. Lib. IV.

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tatives of Jesus Christ, and the faithful dispensers of His mysteries and graces.

These high ideals are destroyed by habitual intercourse and familiarity, and priests are no longer regarded as heavenly messengers and angels of the New Covenant; they are looked upon as are other men, subject to the same weaknesses and liable to the same human maladies.

The aversion which laymen have for a priest who makes himself too common, passes insensibly from his person to his ministry. The sacred word which he preaches and the sacraments which he administers produce little effect in souls, because sermons when not backed up by example are as a rule sterile, and because a physician of the soul, who is himself afflicted, is not the proper person to heal another stricken with the same malady.

What will be the thoughts of men of the world who see a priest at a club or other place of amusement, as worldly, as dissipated, as exuberant as an ordinary layman, and who then sees the same man in the Church, saying Mass at the Altar, absolving penitents in the confessional, preaching the word of God from the pulpit and discharging the august functions of his calling after the manner of any public official in the world? Have they not reason to be scandalized? Is it any wonder that they should say: Our priests do not believe what they preach; if they did, would they lead such lives as they do? *Audite hoc sacerdotes et attendite; laqueus facti estis et rete expansum super Thabor.*

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But it will be urged: Cannot a priest go into the world without contracting its spirit and embracing its maxims? Is it not even necessary for a priest to look up those who have gone astray and visit them in their places of meeting, in order that they may grow familiar with the sight of a minister of religion and that he may then be able to bring them little by little back to the practice of their religious duties?

Assuredly no one will condemn such visits provided they are inspired by zeal and guided by prudence. But we repeat that a priest who spends much of his time in the company of laymen, who takes delight in going to their feasts, and who designates their pleasures as innocent amusements, will never be very successful in rousing sinners, who are grown indifferent, from the lethargy in which they are sunk. For this are needed men like John the Baptist, who came forth from the silence of the desert; for this are needed men whose souls have been nurtured in retirement on the great truths of faith. Only such men can make the austere morality of the Gospel acceptable and sweet to the ambitious and the selfish, to the avaricious and the carnal, to men who never have a thought beyond enjoying to the full all the pleasures of the world.

We insist that there should be no covenant between the Nazarene and the Philistine, *for what participation hath justice with injustice*, as the Apostle says, *or what fellowship hath light with darkness?*[1]

The holy freedom of the sons of God cannot be enjoyed in the land of Egypt, nor can the songs of

[1] II Cor. vi. 14.

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Sion be piously and reverently sung sitting beside the banks of the rivers of Babylon.

What good can I do, then, in a world which hates me, and which I am forbidden to love? It is not there that I shall find Thee, my Jesus, but it is there rather that I shall lose Thee; it is there that the spirit of faith is dissipated, the heart is hardened and piety enervated: *Haec est turba in qua Jesus amittitur.* If I seek Thee and only Thee, if Thou art my sole treasure, I well know where Thou art to be found. Thou art to be found in silence and retirement, in fervor and prayer; Thou art to be found at Nazareth with Thy blessed Mother, in the Temple with the Doctors of the Law, with the holy women along the way to Calvary, in the Tabernacle surrounded by the Angels who make up Thy celestial court: *In Jerusalem invenitur, non in Capharnaum, quod interpretatur villa consolationis, ubi quærunt eum voluptuosi, non invenitur in terra suaviter viventium.—Invenitur in templo, non in palatio, ubi quærunt ambitiosi, ibi non invenitur a Magis.—Invenitur in medio Doctorum, non in medio negotiatorum ubi quærunt cupidi, qui domum Dei domum negotiationis faciunt.*[1]

[1] William of Paris.

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Section Third.

The Priest a Man of Prayer.

The life of our Saviour on earth was in a sense one of continuous prayer; and it is especially by a life of continuous prayer that the priest should make himself the representative of his Divine Model. We shall speak:

1st. Of the necessity of the priest being a man of prayer.

2d. Of the different ways in which he should speak with God in prayer.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

THERE is but one centre and source of all good, namely, God. In Him is the fulness of all things. He prays not, for what has He to ask? To whom should He turn? Neither had the Man-God need of prayer for Himself, because He was essentially holy and perfect. Nor was there any need of calling down Divine grace upon His work, because He was Himself the principle and source of all grace.

But the creature has nothing of his own, he gets from God whatever he has, and he is a ceaseless beggar. We are, says St. Augustine, God's mendicants: *Sumus mendici Dei;* we live on alms, we are ever standing at the door of our merciful Father,

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eagerly asking for our daily bread and praying for the aid without which it is impossible to avoid sin and practise virtue.

If we except the first grace, which we receive without any cooperation on our part, which is independent of prayer, and without which to pray is impossible, it is of faith that prayer is the most universal, the most efficacious means furnished by God by which to enrich ourselves with His gifts; it is the key to His treasure-house, and the channel through which He desires that all blessings shall come to us.

Prayer, therefore, is as essential to the supernatural as is air to the physical life. We inhale air by breathing; prayer is the breath of the soul. We should pray as we breathe: *I open my mouth and draw in my breath*,[1] said the Royal Prophet. Whoso prays shall be saved, whoso prays not shall infallibly be lost. Baptized children who die before coming to the use of reason alone excepted, all who have been saved have been saved by prayer, and all who have been lost have been lost because they did not pray.

Prayer is necessary for all Christians, but it is pre-eminently necessary for the priest.

First of all, the priest is in a most special sense *the* man of prayer. He is commissioned by the Church to worship, to praise and to thank the God of infinite majesty in the name and in behalf of all the faithful, and to treat with Him of the eternal interests of souls. His heart embraces all men, he is instant in asking that they receive all blessings and be freed from all

[1] Psalm cxviii. 11.

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evil; he is the common intercessor for all: *Pro universo terrarum orbe legatus intercedit.*

Next, the priest is *the* man of prayer because in the exercise of his sacred functions he does nothing of himself, but only as the agent or instrument of another: *Instrumentum Dei tanquam principalis agentis.* The light that illuminates the intellect and the grace that stirs the heart do not come from the priest, they are brought down from heaven by prayer. All those apostolic men who wrought such wonderful conversions were men of prayer and meditation. In the silence of their oratory, or at the foot of the Altar, they drew from heaven by fervent prayer those vivid lightnings and divine thunderbolts by which sinners were subdued and cast prostrate at the foot of the Cross.

Prayer is, then, the weapon of the priest. Look at St. Francis Xavier when he set out for India. He was poor, without wealth or power or prestige. No, I mistake: he was rich, he was all-powerful, he was a man of prayer, that is, he had the key to the treasure-house of heaven. By prayer he subdued entire kingdoms to Jesus Christ, converted thousands of unbelievers, opened Japan to the Gospel, and made fertile with zealous Christians the vast plains of Asia.

On the other hand, a priest who prays not is but a spent star, which no longer gives light; a dried-up channel, through which water has ceased to flow; a resounding cymbal, whose noise tortures the ear without touching the heart. What sort of a man of God is he who never speaks to God? What sort of a mediator is he who does not pray? *Pastor et idolum.*

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Useless to others, he goes headlong to destruction himself; his soul gradually loses its vigor and sickens, and his heart withers and dries up like straw out of which the vital sap has been burnt.

Look at that tree which but awhile ago was healthy and strong. Its leaves shrivel and turn yellow, its flowers fall to the ground, and if here and there there is fruit, it is fruit which has lost its sweetness and flavor, and little by little its very branches wither and die. What has happened to it? The trunk seems healthy and the bark sound, and no baneful insect has eaten into its heart. But dig away the earth, lay bare the tap-root; it is stricken with a mortal malady, it is rent asunder, it no longer draws nutrition from the soil. A faithful image, this, of a priest who has left off praying and no longer draws from the Sacred Heart of Jesus the food of his spiritual life. His life is seemingly beyond reproach, he has no glaring vices, but he feels the cold touch of death upon him and he no longer lives the life of a true priest. Ah, this has all come about because he has left off praying, for prayer is as it were the root which supplies the food that nourishes and gives strength and vigor to all virtue.

A man of prayer is like a bird which takes flight and soars aloft to God. Prayer, like wings, bears him away to the spaces above. Cut the wings of a bird and it falls to the earth and flutters in the dust.

Let a Christian or a priest leave off praying, and he no longer rises to the heights of the supernatural; he wanders sorrowfully in the realms of sense; he degrades himself to the condition of brute animals, and he

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becomes in a measure gross and material like the objects about him. Whatever would inspire in him higher and more ennobling thoughts is distasteful, irksome and vexatious; the exercises of piety weary him; spiritual reading sets him to sleep; the sight of the image of his crucified God makes no impression on him; even the tabernacle, where Jesus dwells, is to him only a bit of polished marble or gilded wood.

To such a depth does a priest fall who, during his ecclesiastical novitiate, has not made prayer a holy habit, a need and a necessity of his very being; or who, after he has gone forth from the seminary, has not profited by his opportunities to meditate and be alone with God.

I am well aware that the solitude and silence necessary for prayer are a trial to our natural inclinations. To live is to act, and when we give no external expression to our activity, when, conversing with God, we are not engaged in human affairs, we are persuaded that we are doing nothing and that our lives are being wasted.

To disabuse us of this fatal error Jesus Christ passed years in silence, retirement and prayer. From the depths of His solitude He speaks to us, saying: O men, you deceive yourselves; all this bustling about, all this restless and noisy agitation ends only in vexation of spirit and feverish excitement; this is not to live. Life is found only in God, who is the spring and source of all being: *Apud te est fons vitæ.* Call back those wandering thoughts, those longing desires, that stray hither and thither at will; shut yourselves up in

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the solitude of your own hearts, and there make God your guest; talk with Him, pray to Him, praise Him and bless Him; this is life, this is really to live.

An ecclesiastic who cares not to see or be seen, who, in so far as duty and charity permit, keeps aloof from the world and its excitement,—such a one makes his home a temple of which he is the priest; his oratory is a sanctuary; his heart is an ever-burning lamp, which consumes itself in the presence of the living God; and his prayers and ejaculations are incense whose fragrance is continually going up to the throne of mercy.

Such a man is indeed a blessing to souls, and to the Church a treasure beyond price. May God call him to toil for His glory; he is truly prepared to enter upon so august a ministry; he will labor with the spirit of his Master, Jesus Christ; he will speak out of the fulness of his heart; and his words will be as a fountain welling up from the spring of life within him.

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CHAPTER II.

THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH A PRIEST MAY SPEAK WITH GOD IN PRAYER.

ALL the functions of a priest may be said to consist in prayer, for he is constantly asking from on high the graces which like a divine largess are granted to the faithful. When he prays at the Altar, where, as it were, he makes himself one with the Adorable Victim, he becomes a mediator between God and man. (Of this august and solemn prayer more will be said further on.) When throughout the hours of the day he recites the Divine Office, he prays as one deputed by the Church in the name and in behalf of all the faithful.[1]

But a priest who wishes to form himself on his Divine Model will not be content with what may be called the public or official prayers incident to the functions of his ministry; he will be drawn as if by natural habit to a more personal and intimate union with God in private prayer and meditation. This exercise is the very soul of apostolic men.

Why are there so few Christians in these days really worthy of the name? All have not given up the prac-

[1] On the recitation of the *Breviary* see the Meditations of Father Chaignon entitled: "The Priest Sanctified by the Practice of Prayer." *Every priest has in his library some books treating on the subject.*

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tice of their religion, many pray, many go to confession and Holy Communion, but they do all this so listlessly and so sluggishly that they get very little benefit from it. Souls are weak, debilitated and cowardly because they do not love. And God is not loved because He is not known, because His adorable perfections, His infinite lovableness, His measureless mercy and His countless beneficences are not called to mind or meditated upon.

The Church in her solemn feasts brings before us the touching mysteries of our faith. Christians see them, they pass before their eyes, but they do not grasp their meaning, they do not examine into their deep significance, they do not taste their marvellous sweetness.

Meditation is intended for all; it is less an exercise of the intellect than a movement of the will and an impulse of the heart. A Christian who knows his catechism and is desirous to please God, with a little direction from a good confessor, may become a man of prayer. What is meant by meditation and prayer? This, to think of God, to live in His presence, to converse lovingly with Him. Now who is most likely to get a favorable hearing from God? He who speaks in polished phrase or he who leads a holy life? He who in God's presence indulges in the speculations of science and in the sublime conceptions of genius, or he who comes to Him with an humble and teachable mind and a heart flooded with love? God dwells beyond heights inaccessible to the proud, but He bows down lovingly to the humble: *For the Lord is high*

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and looketh on the low, and the high He knoweth afar off.[1]

In every parish in which a pious and fervent priest has labored for some time will be found a goodly number of persons in whom the sight of a crucifix or an image of our Blessed Lady, the sound of a bell announcing the celebration of some solemnity or other such memorial, will inspire holy and salutary thoughts, thoughts which, when deeply dwelt upon and made their own, will lift them out of and above this sensuous and purely natural life in which the bulk of Christians are steeped and in which many of them are lost.

But it is quite certain that a priest, who is lukewarm and dissipated, who has not himself cultivated the habit of meditation, will never be able to inspire in others a taste and a liking for it. If he does not follow his Divine Master from Bethlehem to Calvary, and thus study His life and fill himself with His spirit, he will never be able to infuse that spirit into others. In a word, without the habit of meditation and the spirit of prayer he can never be a fervent priest, much less an apostolic man.

In virtue as in science and art no one will ever be eminent or even successful who does not set before himself a definite aim and a luminous ideal. These will fix themselves so firmly in the mind, and so dominate his thoughts, that they will become as it were the centre towards which all his life and labors will be directed.

Observe, for instance, how religious orders were

[1] Psalm cxxxvii. 6.

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formed and how they are preserved. Every founder of a religious order was a Saint; he was profoundly convinced of some special need of his age, requiring the exercise of some special virtue, and to the development of this virtue he devoted his entire thought and energy and was zealous in impressing his convictions upon others. As a consequence he gathered about him a body of men who thought as he did, and made their own the imperious yearnings of his heart. He made of each of them a copy of himself, and thus, all entering upon a common life, was formed what is known as a religious order.

The lovable St. Francis of Assisi meditated so deeply on the life of our Saviour that he was fairly ravished with its divine beauty as manifested in the virtues of poverty and humility, and he was so carried away with the love of these virtues that he became their chivalrous champion or Knight, as he called himself, and he wished all his religious to be knights of the same virtues.

As long as the ideal of the founder of a religious order continues the guiding principle of his disciples, as long as they are dominated by his thoughts and impelled by his convictions, so long will the order be strong, full of life and energy and enthusiasm; but in the measure in which his spirit is lost, in the same measure will the order deteriorate and be enfeebled. May not the same principle of growth and decay be applied to a parish and its pastor? What is the mission of a pastor? He is sent to gather together men of good will, to infuse into them his own convic-

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tions and to form them by his own example, so that his thoughts will be their thoughts, and they will be ready, if need be, to sacrifice all things, even life itself, for their convictions.

But it is clear that if a pastor is to bring men to accept his ideas and to hold them firmly and tenaciously he must himself be thoroughly convinced of their truth, and to this end he must meditate upon them continuously, so that his very soul may become quickened by their life and substance. This is what all men have done who have ever exercised any considerable influence upon their fellow men; this is what has been done in the temporal order by those men whom the world delights to honor and whom it calls its heroes; this is what has been done in the spiritual order by holy priests and apostolic men, and to this is due their success in saving souls. Meditation makes men of conviction whose words are potent in subduing minds and who win hearts by their inexhaustible charity.

We are amazed at the conversions made by so many zealous missionaries. The secret of it all is this: that when they went forth to their work after long and intimate communication with God, they had only one thought, one wish, one desire, namely, that of getting others to know and love the Author of all good and of gaining souls to Him. They meditated upon the greatness of God, upon His adorable perfections, upon His infinite love, upon the nobility and dignity of the human soul, created in the image of God and purchased with the blood of Christ, until these thoughts so possessed their very being and so enthralled them that

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they could think of nothing else. These convictions strengthened and invigorated their souls. They were their dominant and sovereign thoughts, swaying them with so great a supremacy that they were changed into men of magnanimous mould, into heroes and saints; for a saint is always a hero, and sanctity is the most sublime heroism.

On the other hand, a priest, who does not continuously keep before his mind in meditation the high duties imposed upon him by his calling, will always be a feeble, hesitating soul, incapable of making upon others a strong and lasting impression. His energies will be wholly scattered and dissipated, because he will allow his mind to stray hither and thither upon a multitude of objects which alternately engage and amuse it. In consequence of this condition of mind, a host of thoughts, good and bad, a thousand whimsical and fantastic imaginations, will crowd and jostle one another, pass and repass through his intellect and imagination, disturbing and throwing into confusion the whole interior life. The atmosphere of the soul, so to speak, will be laden with noises like to the buzzing of bees swarming about a hive. The soul of such a priest will resemble a dismantled house, or a sea in a storm: it will be the very image of chaos. The sport of every wind that blows, a mark for every shaft, how can he fix his thoughts upon any subject or courageously carry out any resolution, or overcome obstacles, or successfully carry forward any great enterprise?

Who does not see in all this the portrait of many ministers of the Altar? Might it not be a portrait of

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yourself? There was a time when you spent daily at least a half an hour meditating and when you therefore lived a fervent life. Then the great truths of faith, the awful obligations of the priesthood, were continually present to your mind. Your only thought was the glory of God, the salvation of souls and your own sanctification, and to accomplish all this you courageously faced every danger and bore up under every difficulty. What has become of this zeal, this generosity, this enthusiasm for virtue? Truth is ever the same, God is equally good now as then, equally great and lovable; your own salvation and that of your brethren is still of all things the most precious and most desirable, in fact the one thing necessary. But you do not look upon these things as once you did. Your convictions, being no longer nurtured by the food of meditation, are fading away and losing their hold upon you; your soul has lost its strength and energy. To the splendid enthusiasm of faith have succeeded listlessness, disrelish and possibly discouragement; and now you are only a tepid and slothful priest—salt that has lost its savor.

Unfortunate priest! *Quantum mutatus ab illo.* Outwardly you perform all your functions as before, but you do so through habit, negligently and carelessly. You go up to the Altar, you preach from the pulpit, you sit in the tribunal of penance, you speak, you labor, but it is evident that the inward spirit is gone, and that your heart is not in your work. The faithful are poorly instructed, their faith is shaken, the entire parish is going to decay; the head is stricken, and the

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effects of his malady are felt in every member of the body.

Ah, let us not deceive ourselves. If we are not men of prayer, if we do not frequently warm our heart with the sacred fire of meditation, we may indeed bear upon us the priestly character and wear the priestly garb, but the spirit will be wanting and we shall become whited sepulchres, having only the outward semblance of priests.

The life of a priest is a life *hid with Christ in God.* That which sustains, renews and invigorates it is the habit of recollection and intimate communion with God, who, when He speaks to the soul, illuminates it, chastens it, and endows it with power from on high. *Disce exteriora contemnere et ad interiora te dare, et videbis regnum Dei in te vivere.*

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Section Fourth.

The Priest a Man of Study.

The hidden life of Jesus was a life of toil, and in this He should be imitated by all who consecrate themselves to Him in the ecclesiastical state, and also by all those who in these days discharge its ministrations.

Jesus labored at Nazareth. Who labored? The great Architect of the Universe, He who made the heavens and the earth. For what end did He labor? In the beginning God labored six days and created this vast universe and all the marvels it contains. What then will a God produce who works for thirty years? The Man-God did not work in the humble house of Nazareth to display His power; He did not even choose one of the more distinguished and honorable professions of the world; He did not write learned works or paint masterpieces; on the contrary, He handled rough and common tools; He shaped wood into various forms; He earned His bread by the sweat of His brow: *I am poor, and in labors from my youth.*[1]

Is this an occupation that becomes an heir to the throne of David? the Son of God?

Did the Son of God in becoming man consider what was fitting and becoming according to the standard of this world? To the Infinite Goodness only that was becoming which was necessary to our needs. What did the Redeemer set Himself to do? He wished to restore the entire human family, and hence it was proper to begin at the bottom and not at the top. In humbling Himself to become one of the numerous and much-despised class of artisans, there is no profession or occupation He did not dignify and ennoble, and He taught every one the necessity of labor. True, this labor need not be the same for all; it varies according to the different conditions of life and according to the divers offices to be discharged in society.

Jesus Christ was to come before the world to preach to men the doctrines of salvation, but as He had within Himself all the treasures of knowledge, there was no need of Him preparing

[1] Psalm lxxxvii. 16.

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Himself for His ministry by preliminary study. We, however, being, like all the sons of Adam, born in ignorance and darkness, must begin early to acquire knowledge by study, and never as long as we live leave off studying if we wish to properly prepare ourselves to be the teachers of the people and the light of the world.

We shall consider here two points: the necessity of study for the priest, and the objects of study.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY OF STUDY.

THE whole life of a priest should be a life of study. Monsignor Boyer in his *Spiritual Retreat* gives three excellent reasons for this. A priest should study, 1st, to acquire knowledge; 2d, to preserve what he has acquired; and 3d, to protect himself.

1st. The Priest should Study to Acquire Knowledge.

Knowledge is necessary to the priest: *For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth.*[1] And again: *Because thou hast rejected knowledge I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of the priesthood to Me.*[2] The Church sends forth her priests to instruct: *Going teach.* She has always held that ignorance is a canonical impediment to the reception of Orders, and a sufficient reason to exclude ecclesiastics from the offices of the ministry: *Tam vita quam doctrina debet clarere ecclesiasticus doctor*, says St. Gregory, *nam doctrina sine vita arrogantem reddit, vita sine doctrina inutilem facit.*

[1] Malac. ii. 7. [2] Osea iv. 6.

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Knowledge is necessary in the priest, a knowledge acquired by long study and severe application. It is not enough to have received from heaven great mental endowments and splendid natural talents; these must be developed and cultivated. God gives a rich soil, but man must make it fruitful by the sweat of his brow.[1]

How many young priests, gifted with great ability, quick perception and an exuberant imagination, have produced absolutely nothing worthy their natural powers! And why? Because they have neglected their preliminary studies. When they talk in public you admire their wonderful facility of speech; they are in fact eloquent, brilliant, and some passages seem almost the inspirations of genius; but these are only flashes which for a moment light up the firmament and then are lost in the surrounding darkness. Will it be believed for an instant that such artificial fireworks are of any avail to batter down the ramparts which an arrogant and impious science has built up against religion?

Yes, arrogant and impious. Such at least our Holy Fathers and writers thought it; those learned and virtuous men who gave so much time to study, and who produced marvellous works, unfortunately too little read by priests in this age. If an Origen or an Augustine, a Jerome or a Thomas, a Bellarmine or a Petavius, a Suarez or a Mabillon should come among us at the present day, what would be their surprise at seeing the little benefit derived by us from those

[1] The fellow students of the celebrated Bossuet were accustomed to call him, on account of his habit of indefatigable labor, *Bos tuetus aratro*.

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prodigious works which cost them so many sleepless nights, and which they left to us as a glorious heritage and as an arsenal filled with powerful weapons with which to vanquish the enemies of Christ and His Church? We know indeed that all false and impious systems were long ago refuted and demolished by the early apologists; but this is not enough; our duty is to prove this to an age which holds the contrary, to an age which is ever insanely boasting of its progress and which thinks itself incomparably superior to all the ages that went before.

A priest must not only possess knowledge, this knowledge must be of a kind to answer the wants of the age in which he lives. The enemy of the Church is skilful in varying his attacks so as to take advantage of the weakness which time and circumstances reveal. Arianism and Mohammedanism, Protestantism and Rationalism were all the work of Satan, but in promoting each he modified his methods and changed his arms to suit the occasion. Whether the visible agent be Julian or Luther, Arius or Calvin, it is Satan who directs and governs all, and he never makes a mistake in selecting the most effective arms for the combat; and hence, as he did not raise up a Voltaire in the Middle Age, so neither will he call back to life a Mohammed in our own.

When, some four centuries ago, firearms began to come into use, certain valiant warriors of that day refused to adopt a method of fighting which, as they thought, practically dispensed with personal courage and skill, and they continued to go into battle encum-

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bered with heavy coats of mail and enormous lances. What was the result? Before they got within striking distance of the enemy they fell under a hail of bullets, and, in spite of themselves, they were forced, if they were to fight at all on even terms in the future, to adopt the arms of their enemies.

So also must we change our arms and methods of warfare when the enemy changes his batteries and plan of attack. We must pursue him into the plain where he makes a stand, learn his arms and manner of attack, and turn them against himself.

A priest is ordained to be a defender of the truth, and he should always be ready to give a prompt reply to the current errors of the time in which he lives. Should he find himself engaged in controversy or the object of attack, he should be able to acquit himself with honor, so as not to invite either the scorn of his enemies or the compassion of his friends. Would it not indeed be humiliating if one who should be a light, not only to the ignorant of the world but to the learned also, were unable to give an answer to the impertinences of some smart and flippant youth who chanced to possess a superficial knowledge and gloss of modern science?

However, let us not be misunderstood. God forbid that we should think of substituting human knowledge for divine. It would indeed be a joy to our enemies to see us come down from the heights of the world of grace and take up our position with them in the world of nature. Once they discovered that we relied only on profane wisdom they would cease either to respect

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or fear us. It is indeed desirable that a priest should have some knowledge of physics, geometry, archeology and other profane sciences, but all this should enter only as an accessory into his plan of studies, for he is, after all, not a man of nature, but a man of God.

We insist, however, that a profound study of religion, which is the universal science, is absolutely necessary; we should take a broad and comprehensive view of it in order to show that it fully satisfies all the demands of the intellect, all the legitimate yearnings of the heart, and all the cravings of humanity.

Taking our stand upon the heights of Christianity, we dominate all human sciences, we embrace all the spaces through which the human mind can wander, we hold in our hands the thread which guides philosophy in all its researches, and we have thus within view the solution of all problems.

2d. The Priest must Study to Preserve the Knowledge He has Acquired.

To preserve? I should rather say to acquire knowledge, at least where there is question of a young priest, for his studies are scarcely begun, and if during his seminary life he has learned the art of studying well, he has done a great deal. What does he know when he comes out from the seminary? If he has conscientiously employed his time while he was studying, he will know a little of many things and nothing well: *de omni re aliquid, de toto nihil*, as the proverb has it; he has at most only the key to knowledge and

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has but entered upon the road leading up to the vast field of Theology which ought to be the subject of his studies.

But what as a matter of fact often happens? Scarcely has the young priest left the lecture-hall when he puts aside all serious books. He reads a newspaper or some worthless novel, or at most a chapter now and then of the Bible, and this is the sum total of his study. But he says: Have I not gone through a full course of theology? Have I not regularly stood my examinations? I know enough to discharge the duties that will be entrusted to me—*I know enough!* Such an expression is a scandal in the mouth of a priest. Yes, you know enough to make no end of blunders, to do little good to souls and much mischief. *I know enough!* And therefore more than those who never thought of saying they knew enough, such as Bossuet and Suarez, St. Thomas and St. Augustine, more than St. Jerome and all the great Doctors of the Church, who never ceased to apply themselves seriously to grave studies. *I know enough!* Yes, enough to bring contempt upon your ministry and to compromise your own salvation and the salvation of your brethren: *If any man think that he knoweth anything, he hath not yet known as he ought to know.*[1]

You know enough! Granted that you do, but is not acquired knowledge soon lost if not added to and refreshed by study? If you put aside your books and leave off serious study you will soon forget the little theology you learned in your few years of seminary

[1] I. Cor. viii. 2.

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life. You will be distracted with the dissipations of the world, with its amusements and its vanities; your mind will be a storehouse of empty and worthless trifles, and you will think of nothing else. To make room for these strange guests divine science will be thrust into some obscure corner of the soul where you will never enter, and which will be for you, as a modern writer puts it, a forgotten land.

Listen to these grave words of Benedict XIV.: "It is not enough to have gone through theology once, to have understood its meaning; no, not even to have taught it in public; one moreover should be assiduous in cultivating this science in order to deeply impress upon the mind that which was once learned and to acquire fresh information of which theology is the abundant source."[1] If even a single branch of knowledge is enough and more than enough to occupy the entire lifetime of a man, what is to be said of all dogmatic theology, and above all of the whole of moral theology, a science of such complexity that it fairly bristles with difficulties?

3d. A Priest should Study to Protect Himself.

Woe to the priest who is not given to study, more particularly one who lives in the country. What will become of him? *Idleness hath taught much evil.*[2]

Are priests who do not occupy themselves in their study, who permit the few books they have to lie on their book-shelves covered with dust, men of prayer

[1] Instit. xviii. 2. [2] Ecclus. xxxiii. 29.

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and meditation? Alas, no: they have as little taste for prayer as for reading. How do they employ the long hours which an unlaborious ministry or one illy discharged puts at their disposal? In running hither and thither, in making useless visits, or in surrendering themselves to their imaginations which are filled with foolish and often perilous images.

A member of the French Academy on one occasion in his inaugural address used these words: "The intellect and the heart of man are like two pans of a balance: if the intellect is great, the heart of man is lifted up; if the intellect is poor, the heart sinks down." This comparison, which is not quite exact when applied to profane knowledge, is eminently true when applied to a priest. If his mind is not filled with the great thought of eternity and the sublime truths of faith, his heart will at once begin to sink into the depths of sin, and will soon be wallowing in the filth of the baser passions.

Observe, on the contrary, the ecclesiastic who makes the study of religion his habitual occupation, and the source of his sweetest delights. That his affections are pure and his aspirations noble there is no doubt. And as a matter of fact what could be more potent to give worthy impulses to the soul, elevation to our thoughts, dignity and generosity to our sentiments, than the ceaseless study of Sacred Scripture, the reading of the Fathers, and the contemplation of the magnificence of creation, of the prodigies of redemption and the marvels wrought by God in His Saints?

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CHAPTER II.

THE SUBJECTS WHICH A PRIEST SHOULD STUDY.

Theology.

THEOLOGY is not only the most noble of all sciences, it is also the most comprehensive. It is the universal science. Melchior Canus wrote a very estimable work entitled: *De Locis Theologicis*, that is, the sources from which theologians can and should draw their arguments for the defence of religion. Of these arguments he gives ten, and in the following order:

1st, Sacred Scripture; 2d, Apostolic Tradition; 3d, the authority of the Catholic Church; 4th, the authority of the Councils, and especially the Ecumenical Councils, which represent the Universal Church; 5th, the authority of the Roman Church, which by divine privilege is truly Apostolical; 6th, the authority of the early Fathers and Doctors; 7th, the authority of Scholastic Theology; 8th, reason, which by the light of nature examines and discusses all human knowledge; 9th, Philosophy, which, following sane and right reason, can solidly establish many important truths; 10th, History, transmitted either by the traditions of peoples or by authors worthy of belief. The last three sources are not, accurately speaking, *loci theologici*, but it is neces-

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sary for a theologian to have recourse to philosophical argument when he cannot get from authority a decision which will solve a question.

Judging from this simple syllabus of subjects it is clear that, to be a theologian in the true sense, high intellectual gifts and sound judgment are not enough, it is also necessary to possess a vast erudition, since theology in its fullest meaning is literally a universal science, that is, it is the science of God and all His works.

Is it possible for man to master this science in all its amplitude? No, for this a whole lifetime would not be sufficient. The greatest theologian of the Church, St. Thomas, the Angel of the Schools, knew much, but there was much he did not know, and he left unsolved many mysteries which we shall never know until we see them revealed in the light of a blessed eternity. The amount of knowledge which a priest should possess cannot be determined with precision. All have not the same facility for acquiring knowledge, or the same leisure to give to study, nor are the duties of all the same.

The following, however, are branches of study which every ecclesiastic should cultivate and in which he should strive to make progress day by day:

(1) *Dogmatic Theology.* — It is sufficient for an ordinary layman to know the principal mysteries of his faith and the duties of his state in life, and ordinarily more cannot be asked. But a priest, who is a master and a teacher in Israel, cannot with a safe conscience be content with these elementary notions. He must

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have a clear and precise knowledge of all great dogmatic questions, since to him the faithful must turn for a solution of their doubts and difficulties: *They shall seek the law at his mouth.*[1]

The great, the master error of our day is rationalism, which relegates God to heaven and proclaims man sovereign and independent on earth. Humanity has in itself the principle of its progress and development; it pursues its destiny through a thousand varying evolutions, obedient to the law of fate. There is no supernatural order, no providence, no mediator between God and man, and no redemption because there was no fall. There is no sin and therefore no hell in the strict sense of that word. Christianity, superior indeed to Paganism, is but a philosophical system which has had its day, and must now make way for another system better suited to the actual needs of humanity.

These are the ideas that are being scattered broadcast through the press, in books and pamphlets and by word of mouth, and are making their way and filtering down among the lowest classes of society, stifling their faith. Is it not the duty of a priest to combat these errors, to set forth clearly the proofs of creation and providence, of faith and a supernatural order, of redemption and the necessity of grace, of the rewards that await the just and the punishments in store for the wicked? But how can he satisfactorily establish these truths if he has not made a serious study of the proofs on which they rest?

(2) *Moral Theology.*—Mr. Dieulin, in his work

[1] Malac. ii. 7.

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entitled: "*The Good Parish Priest*," strongly insists on the importance of a priest not leaving off the study of Moral Theology. We give briefly an outline of his argument.[1]

As a teacher of morality a priest should know in what and how far a law is binding; where truth and duty coincide; how to apply principles judiciously without, on the one hand, relaxing them too much or, on the other, pressing them too far. If, however, he is lacking in the necessary knowledge, either he will not know these principles at all or he will make a wrong application of them. How will he be able to distinguish between what is of command and what is of counsel, between what is permitted or tolerated or prohibited? How will he be able to solve questions of justice, which are frequently most intricate and about which even theologians disagree? How can he impose on his penitent the obligation of restitution, or dispense him from it on his own responsibility?

As a physician he should know the different diseases of the soul, and how to distinguish between leprosy and leprosy, that is, how to discern habits of sin, its proximate and remote occasions; their cause and effect, and how to determine whether preservative or medicinal remedies are to be applied.

As a judge of conscience he ought to know the limits of his jurisdiction, and he ought to be familiar with censures, reserved cases, irregularities, decisions on matrimony, the duties of each state of life and their transgressions, usury in contracts, fraud in commerce

[1] Vol. I. p. 237 et seq.

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and trade, and, in a word, the whole of moral theology, the theory of which is so difficult and the practice or application of it still more so.

Now, if a priest is not thoroughly up in his moral theology, how easy is it for him to give a wrong, a hazardous or rash decision in directing souls!

Yes, some one will say, but he will doubt and seek counsel. To know how and when to doubt is a rarer gift than is generally believed. Only educated and thinking men reflect and hesitate. The ignorant man never doubts about anything.

In a multitude of cases of conscience how can a safe decision be given without a knowledge of Canon Law, and without even some notion of Civil Law ?

For three centuries, says De Maistre, history has been one long conspiracy against the truth. Facts are distorted and mutilated and wrested into arguments against the Church. How can these false witnesses be met and answered, how can these prejudices be rooted out and swept away, how can these erroneous opinions be controverted and corrected, if a priest is ignorant of the facts of profane history, and, above all, if he has not made a deep and careful study of the history of the Church ?

In these days there does not exist that living faith among the people which will lead them to look upon the priest as the representative of Jesus Christ. They consider in him only *the man*, or those acquirements or accomplishments which give him a certain dignity or prestige, and in their eyes his highest claim to respect is his education and knowledge.

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On one occasion in a sitting of the Council of State, Napoleon the First said: The clergy have lost their preeminence in the sciences; it has passed to the civil order.

It was unjust to upbraid us with this temporary inferiority. Numbers of us were carried off by the fury of the Revolution, and the few who remained were barely sufficient to minister to the many and pressing spiritual needs of our brethren. Our energies were then devoted to works of zeal whenever an opportunity offered, and if we were granted some little time for study, we had always to be prepared to hasten away when called to relieve the distressed. In those days of severest trial we knew no other science than that of oblation and sacrifice.

While we were spending our lives in relieving our afflicted brethren our enemies got possession of the field of science, which we had been forced for a time to abandon. Having done so, they spared no pains and left no stone unturned to seek out arguments against us and to build up positions of defence, from behind which they ceaselessly assailed both the Church and society.

But having now recruited our numbers, we should set courageously to work, in the interest of our faith, to recover the ground we have lost, and to prove to the world that the clergy in their normal condition are not only men of charity and virtue, but of learning also.

Still, as we have already said, it can hardly be expected that the bulk of the clergy, and especially those engaged in the care of souls, should give themselves

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up to a very profound study of the profane sciences. A parish priest of course should have a good library, and money invested in books is the only form of wealth that can give no scandal to anyone. Having only a limited time to study, he should devote himself to such works as will be most useful in supplying the information necessary for his own needs and those of his parishioners.

From among works of Theology, whether dogmatic or moral, he should select those which are considered the best and the most exact, and these he should read and reread as often as possible: *Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.*

And have not the works of theologians distinguished for piety no less than learning, treating of ascetical theology, also a claim on the attention of a good priest, and should they not furnish him food for meditation? I know of no study more profitable than that of ascetical theology. Works on this subject are numerous and suited to every degree of the interior life and to all the varied operations of grace. Here also care and judgment should be used in making a selection, and, confining ourselves to a small number of works, we should make the substance of them our own, assimilating it and, as it were, converting it into our very blood and life. It is not enough, says a writer, to let it fall like dew on the soul, it must penetrate the soul, give to it form and color, and make it better, wiser, stronger and more generous. Otherwise where is the good of reading and study? What will it avail to learn lessons of wisdom and teach them to

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others, if we do not put them into practice in our own lives? *Non parenda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est.*

Observe the bee: it alights on flower or shrub, absorbs its sap, its strength and its quintessence, assimilates these and produces a delightful honey which is neither thyme nor other aromatic plant, but something wholly different and wholly its own.

Similarly we should draw from books their very marrow and life with which to nourish our souls, form our judgments, clear our consciences, rectify our wills; in a word, make their contents primarily our own, so that thereby we may become virtuous men and pious priests and thus be better able to labor with fruit for the instruction and sanctification of our brethren.

It is clear, then, that study should be one of the chief occupations of a priest. It is as true of the food of the intellect as of that of the body that it must be procured by the sweat of the brow: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*[1]

That which ennobles and makes meritorious alike the application of the man of study and the toil of the husbandman is the intention which each has in view and the end to which their respective labors are directed. In study, says St. Bernard, all have not the same end in view; some study simply to acquire knowledge, and this is curiosity; others to gain a reputation for learning, and this is vanity; others to make of their knowledge a sort of commercial commodity, and this is lust of money; still others to use their

[1] Gen. iii. 19.

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knowledge to rise to places of eminence and dignity, and this is ambition. There are some, however, who study for self-instruction, and this is prudence; and there are some who study that they may be able to instruct others, and this is charity.[1]

It is not difficult, then, to determine what should be the intention of a priest in studying, if his labors are to bear fruit and his teachings to be profitable to others. All his reading and study will be simply labor lost, and his knowledge and learning illusory and dangerous, if in his studies he sets any other aim before him than that of his own sanctification and the sanctification of his brethren. He may fancy that he possesses a wealth of information, that he is intellectual and learned, whereas in matter of fact he will be poor and blind and miserable. The world may admire and praise him, but he will really be an object of contempt and compassion.

The true science of every man is that of his everlasting happiness; if he knows that, he knows all; if he is ignorant of that, he knows nothing. St. Paul, who was master of all knowledge human and divine, boasted that he knew only Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified.

Unhappy the man, soliloquizes St. Augustine, who knows everything, and knows not Thee, my God, who should be the one object of his knowledge, as Thou art the one object of his happiness. *Infelix homo, qui sciat illa omnia te autem nescit. Beatus autem, qui te scit, etiam si illa nesciat.*

[1] Serm. XXXVI. in Cantic.

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Unfortunate indeed is the teacher who knows the whole world and knows not its Creator, who teaches others and knows not himself, who preaches like a wise man and lives like a fool, who points out to others the path to virtue and himself treads the path of vice. The greater his knowledge, the greater will be his responsibility, and the more rigorous his punishment for the bad use he has made of it. What would be thought of a pilot who should know everything except the science of navigation? or of a minister of State who should know everything except the art of governing? or of a general who should know everything except the art of war? And can a priest, a pastor, who knows everything except the art of guiding souls and sanctifying his people, be accounted a learned man or a wise one? For him there should be only one science necessary, namely, the science of saving his own soul and those of the people entrusted to him, whose loss will inevitably entail, as a consequence, the loss of his own eternal happiness; whereas, on the other hand, their salvation will be the salvation, the welfare and the glory of himself.

Hoc nescire putes, sine Jesu plurima scire:
Si Jesum bene scis, satis est, si cætera nescis.

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EPILOGUE TO THE SECOND CONSIDERATION.

NAZARETH should be the home of the desires and love of those who aspire to live an interior life. There the sweetest and most cherished mysteries were found in their perfection. There dwelt the persons most dear to the heart of God. There was given to man an example of virtues the most modest and retiring and, at the same time, the most solid and perfect.

1st. There was accomplished the great mystery of the Incarnation, which opened to us all the treasures of grace and glory.

Verbum Dei Deus, Filius Dei, qui in principio erat apud Deum, per quem facta sunt omnia, et sine quo factum est nihil, propter liberandum hominem ab æterna morte factus est homo. . . . Ingreditur haec infima Jesus Christus Dominus noster, de cœlesti sede descendens, et a paterna gloria non recedens, novo ordine, nova nativitate generatus; novo ordine quia, invisibilis in suis, visibilis factus est in nostris; incomprehensibilis voluit comprehendi; ante tempora manens, esse cœpit ex tempore. Nova autem nativitate genitus est, conceptus a Virgine, natus ex Virgine, sine paternæ carnis concupiscentia, sine maternæ integritatis iniuria, quia futurum hominum Salvatorem talis ortus decebat, qui et in se

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haberet humanæ substantiæ naturam, et humanæ carnis inquinamenta nesciret.[1]

2d. There for thirty years was given to the world a spectacle of the most sublime grandeur and of the most profound humility.

Mirare utrumlibet, et elige quid amplius mireris, sive Filii benignissimam dignationem, sive matris excellentissimam dignitatem. Utrinque stupor, utrinque miraculum. Et quod Deus fœminæ obtemperet humilitas absque exemplo; et quod Deo fœmina principetur, sublimitas sine socio.[2]

3d. Nazareth is the great school, almost the paradise of interior souls.

Consider the persons. What peace, what modesty, what serenity, what attractiveness and amiability radiated from the infant face of Jesus, what nobility and majesty, revealing the presence of His Divinity! Observe the mother, her virginal modesty. Her eyes feed upon the divine Infant, and her motherly heart leaps with joy. The sight of Jesus, her Divine Child, keeps her in continuous ecstasy. In the fulness of her heart she seems ever on the point of breaking forth into the words of that marvellous canticle: *My soul doth magnify the Lord.*

And the incomparable Joseph! How his thoughts are fixed on what is going on under his eyes! He is the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus. This thought ravishes him and carries him out of himself.

Listen to their speech. Those who live an in-

[1] St. Leo, Serm. I. et II. de Nat.

[2] St. Bernd. Hom. I de Laud. Virg. Matr.

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terior life speak little. Joseph has little to say, Mary less, and Jesus is almost silent. But they understand one another. These three hearts are united, lost, absorbed in God.

Study their actions. Idleness is unknown in that Holy House. Nothing is done from a natural motive or from worldly solicitude. There is not the slightest action or movement that is not referred to the glory of God.

Enter into that House which is a heaven in miniature, and place yourself near the three persons who dwell there. What a contrast! On their part peace, silence, forgetfulness of the world, a life hidden in God; on yours uneasiness, anxiety, ceaseless agitation. You cannot be at peace even there under the protecting hand of God; you cannot endure to keep your life a mystery between yourself and Him.

4th. Nazareth presents to us a model of a properly governed home.

Who rules there? Jesus? No, for He is the Son of Mary, obedient to His holy mother and to His foster-father: *He was subject to them.*[1] Mary? No, because she is the submissive wife of Joseph. St. Joseph? Assuredly that holy man is careful not to give commands to the Son of God or to the Queen of Angels. Who, then, does rule? All? That would be a source of confusion. No one? That would be anarchy. Authority resided in Joseph, but he never had occasion to exercise it, since all his commands were anticipated, and he besought rather than commanded. Wonderful

[1] Luke ii. 51.

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sight! Here is a miniature kingdom in which there is no lawgiver, and yet all things are done with perfect order. No one commands, and all obey; each is master, yet more servant than master; each would feel it a trial to command, but a joy to obey; love gives the law, and humility executes it.

5th. Finally, for this *Consideration* should come to an end where it began, Nazareth is the great school in which the priest should learn to crush out vanity and all desire to make a noise in the world. The Son of God wrought in the workshop of a poor carpenter. Judgments of men, human opinion, pride of man, be ye confounded forever!

The world cries out to me: Why will you remain in obscurity and forgotten? Could you not occupy a more eminent position, employ your talents and gain both praise and applause?

The applause of whom? For whose praise should I be a mendicant? For that of vain men, full of themselves, or for that of virtuous men, filled with the spirit of God? Have the first any merit that we should seek to please them? The second, I admit, are such that one should desire their approbation, but what they deserve still more is to be imitated. Therefore, following their example, we should extinguish every desire to please any one but God.

But to live to oneself, to pass unnoticed from the cradle to the grave, is not this a great humiliation, a very trying sacrifice?

O man, that it should be a sorrow to you not to be esteemed by the world! And Jesus, what figure did

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He make, what renown did He gain on earth for thirty years? Was He less great because He was not before the world, because His name was not in the mouth of all, because He did not attract to Himself the gaze of men by His splendid achievements?

While Jesus was living in solitude, forgotten by all, there lived sagacious politicians, kings and emperors who governed empires; there were orators and poets, philosophers and captains of great name; there was Rome, the proud, the capital city of the world, with her Campidoglio and colossal monuments. Did the Omnipotent from His throne on high fix His gaze upon any of these impersonations and evidences of worldly greatness? No, He looked lovingly upon the obscure village of Nazareth, and upon the workshop of Joseph. He said to His Angels: There dwells My beloved Son; see how He labors, how He humbles Himself, how He annihilates Himself for My glory.

Who is the priest in a diocese whom God looks upon most lovingly and with tenderest complacency? Is he possibly one who holds the most eminent position and whose talents have gained for him a name? No, but he who is least in his own eyes.

Look at that priest who is sent into the country, into the midst of rude and ignorant farmers; he blesses God for having entrusted to him so obscure and toilsome a mission, and he cheerfully settles down to work, resolved to pass there his whole life. This priest is dear to the heart of God; this priest is one who in the hands of the Omnipotent Lord will accomplish great things. He is conscious that he is nothing and has no right to

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claim anything as his own; he realizes that he is but a poor and unworthy instrument. Power from on high will come upon him and he will work wonders.

O treasure of the hidden life! This is the state preferred and most loved by the Saviour of the world: *Jesus Nazarenus amat nesciri*, says the author of the *Imitation*. Love then to be accounted nothing, to be occupied in humble and obscure offices, in offices from which no glory is to be gained. This is the tomb of self-love and the way that leads to glory: *Whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted.*[1]

ORATIO ST. THOMAS AQUINATIS, QUA PETUNTUR VIRTUTES VIRO APOSTOLICO NECESSARIÆ.

Concede mihi, misericors Deus, quæ tibi placita sunt, ardentur concupiscere, prudentur investigare, veracitur agnoscere, perfecte adimplere ad laudam et gloriam nominis tui. Ordina statum meum; et quod a me requiris ut faciam, tribue ut sciam; et da exequi sicut oportet et expedit animæ meæ. Da mihi Domine Deus meus, inter prospera et adversa non deficere, ut in illis non extollar, in istis non deprimar: de nullo gaudeam vel doleam, nisi quod ducat ad te; nulli placere appetam, vel disciplicere timeam, nisi tibi.

Vilescant mihi omnia transitoria, et cara sint mihi omnia tua propter te, et tu, Deus, præter omnia. Tædeat me gaudii, quod est sine te, nec aliquid cupiam, quod est extra te. Delectet me labor qui est pro te, et tædiosa sit mihi omnis quies quæ est sine te. Frequenter da mihi cor ad te dirigere, et in defectione mea cum emendationis proposito dolendo pensare. Fac me, Domine Deus, obedientem sine contradictione; pauperem sine defectione; castum sine corruptione; patientem sine murmuratione; humilem sine fictione, et hilarem sine dissolutione; tristem sine dejectione, maturum sine gravitate; agilem sine levitate; timentem sine desperatione; veracem sine duplicitate; operantem bona sine præsumptione; proximum corrigere sine elatione; ipsum ædificare verbo et exemplo sine simulatione.

Da mihi cor pervigil, quod nulla a te abducat curiosa cogi-

[1] Matt. xxiii. 12.

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tatio; da nobile, quod nulla deorsum trahat indigna affectio; da rectum, quod nulla deorsum obliquet sinistra intentio, da liberum, quod nulla sibi vindicet perversa eo violenta affectio. Largire mihi, Domine Deus meus, intellectum te cognoscentem; diligentiam, te quærentem, sapientiam, te invenientem; conversationem, tibi placentem; perseverantiam, te fideliter expectantem; et fiduciam, te finaliter amplectentem; tuis pœnis configi per pœnitentiam, tuis beneficiis uti in via per gratiam, et tandem tuis gaudiis in patria perfrui per gloriam. Per Dominum, etc., etc. . . .

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Consideration Third.

THE PRIEST IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS HOLY MINISTRY REPRODUCES THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

A priest is neither a solitary nor a Carthusian, he is a levite formed in the shadow of the sanctuary; he prepares himself in retirement by prayer and study for the offices of the priesthood. He should continue during his whole life these two exercises of prayer and study; but he should know how to adjust them to the occupations of his holy ministry.

It was said to the Apostles: *Go, teach;* this admonition has been repeated from age to age; it is the word of command of the militia of Jesus Christ; it speeds his soldiers to every quarter of the globe, and from end to end of the earth: *Euntes —Go.* The priest, then, is one *who is sent.*

(1) The Necessity of a Divine Mission.

(2) The Conditions required to properly discharge it.

These will be the subjects of this *Consideration.*

Section First.

The Necessity of a Divine Mission.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORDER ESTABLISHED BY GOD AND THE EXAMPLE OF OUR SAVIOUR PROVE THIS NECESSITY.

I. THE dogmas of the Christian religion are not a discovery of the human intellect or a conquest of human genius: the Christian does not say *scio—I*

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know; but *credo—I believe.* Faith is a manifestation, a revelation from on high; faith comes by hearing, says St. Paul. Religious truth was never transmitted to man in any other way than by messengers, embassadors and missionaries, men sent of God, clothed with His authority and speaking in His name.

When our first parents disobeyed and forfeited their inheritance, God promised that He would *send* them a Saviour. This Saviour was looked for and called upon for four thousand years under the name of the *Messias, the one sent, missus*, and under this name the Jews still look forward to His coming. From time to time heralds were *sent* to announce Him, and to prepare the people to receive Him. These were the Patriarchs and Prophets, the missionaries of the Old Law.

Finally, in the fulness of time, the Heavenly Messenger, the Divine Missionary, appeared. When His hour was come He began the great mission which is to go on to the end of time; He went up and down Judea announcing the secrets of eternal life.

His personal mission was to last for only three years, and it was to be circumscribed by the limits of Judea. But He chose laborers and fellow-workmen to carry on and continue the work and to extend it to the ends of the earth. He gave them a Head, who was to be His representative and the depository of His authority, and He gave them this commission: *Go, teach all nations: behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.*[1]

Hence the Catholic priesthood is a great body of

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19.

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missionaries, divinely organized for the saving of the human race. All who are called to share in this magnificent work of the conquest of human souls are *missionaries* to whom Jesus Christ has given His commission by the mouth of His representative: *Go, teach.*

This hierarchical order is ever the same, invariable in its constitution and brooking no exception. No one has a right to exercise the sacred ministry unless he *is sent*, unless he can show the title of his mission: *Neither doth any man take the honor to himself unless he is called by God, as Aaron was.*[1] But does not the example of Jesus Christ also prove the necessity *of being sent*—of a mission of such a character that it defines the nature of the work to be done and the way in which to do it?

II. What is necessary in order to have the right to exercise the priesthood? What? A sacred character? Yes, for is not Jesus Christ King and Pontiff by His divine and human nature? *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.*[2] What? A pure and innocent life? Assuredly, for was not Jesus Christ essentially holy? *He shall be called holy.* What? Authority? Undoubtedly, for did Jesus Christ not say of Himself: *All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth?*[3] Strength? Yes, the strength of God: *Christ Jesus upholding all things by the power of His word.*[4] Zeal? *The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up.*[5] Purity of intention? *I seek not My own glory.*[6]

[1] Heb. v. 4. [2] Psal. cix. 4. [3] Matt. xxviii. 18.
[4] Heb. i. 3. [5] John ii. 17. [6] John viii. 50.

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And yet *Christ did not glorify Himself in order that He might be made a High-priest.*[1] He awaited the decree of His Heavenly Father, and once He had received it, He fulfilled it with all fidelity down to the smallest detail, whether as regards time or place or circumstance, without adding to or taking from, or in any way failing in His commission: *One jot or one tittle shall not pass of the Law until all shall be fulfilled.*[2]

Fidelity as to time. For thirty years He remained shut up within the hamlet of Nazareth; zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was consuming Him, for He came down from Heaven only for the purpose of giving Himself to this one great work. But the hour set by His Father was not yet come, and He would not anticipate by a single instant: *My hour is not yet come.*[3]

Fidelity as to place. He would have wished to carry the tidings to all men and to scatter the fire that consumed Him all over the earth, but His Father had fixed the land of Judea as the theatre of His zeal, and He would not go out from thence: *I am not sent except to the lost children of the house of Israel.*[4]

Fidelity as to circumstance. Whether His Father commanded Him to preach His Law in the Temple of Jerusalem, or to the princes of the nation, or in hamlets and villages, or to the humble and ignorant; or whether He commanded Him to be transfigured on Thabor or crucified on Calvary, His answer was ever the same: *Christ was made obedient unto death, even*

[1] Heb. v. 5.
[2] Matt. v. 18.
[3] John ii. 4.
[4] Matt. xv. 24.

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unto the death of the cross.[1] And in every instance He obeyed joyfully and unhesitatingly and without a thought of evading anything: *My food is to do the will of My Father who sent Me.*[2]

From what has just been said we may draw some serious reflections.

First: If Jesus Christ thought it necessary to receive a mission from His Father before entering upon the office of the priesthood, who will dare thrust himself into that formidable ministry without a call from on high? Woe, then, unto those who rashly force the doors of the sanctuary and presumptuously enter there without being called and from no motive other than that of self-interest! Woe to those who bring with them into the priesthood, not solid and tried virtue, but latent and hidden vices, and turbulent passions still unsubdued! Woe to those who take upon themselves the task of teaching others, and who know not themselves! Such priests assume the duties of pilots and undertake to guide vessels on which they are scarcely fit to be passengers.

Next: Jesus waited the hour appointed by His Heavenly Father to begin His mission. Do you also wait until the chief pastor says to you: *Go ye into my vineyard?*[3] On the contrary, you say: I have now labored for many years under a parish priest, I have been trained under his direction, and am I not now capable of governing a parish myself? Jesus would have replied: *My hour has not yet come.*[4] His whole

[1] Philip. ii. 8.
[2] John iv. 34.
[3] Matt. xx. 7.
[4] John ii. 4.

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life was spent in incessantly working in the country into which His Father had sent Him.

You are dissatisfied with your position and you say: I could have been of service to the Church; I could have made a name as a preacher; I could have filled with credit some important position, and I have been sent into the wilds of the country, where I am lost, where I pine away and go to seed. I am really capable of something great, and now I shall die without having accomplished anything. Be careful what you say. You mistake the importunity of self-love for the eagerness of zeal. A priest who, on entering the priesthood, had only the glory of God in view, would say: Lord, you have entrusted to me an august and divine ministry, and I wish in discharging it to have only Thee in view. Where, then, shall I begin my work? Where shall I continue it? When shall I bring it to an end? Whether in a city or in the country, the field that shall be assigned to my labor and zeal shall be made fertile by the sweat of my brow, and to it I shall consecrate my best efforts, the love of my heart, my time, and all that I am.

Again, Jesus accepted with the courage of a great soul all the trials of His mission. Do you likewise accept all that is disagreeable and painful in the work assigned you? In some places a priest is well received, honored and respected; in others he is mistrusted and insulted, and snares are laid for his feet by the evilly disposed. There are positions in the ministry to which a certain splendor attaches, which elicit the esteem of men and open the way to the favors of fortune; whereas

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there are others which have nothing to recommend them except a life of unrequited toil, unknown to all the world. Are you quite as ready to accept the one as the other? Have you the spirit of holy freedom and self-denial necessary for this? If a difficult employment were assigned you, if your superiors were to send you into a poor neglected parish where you would be poorly housed and badly fed and where you would have bodily much to suffer, would you accept courageously and in a spirit of faith so hard and unpromising a charge? *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us? And I said, Lo, here I am, send me.*[1]

[1] Isai. vi. 8.

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CHAPTER II.

THE OBJECT OF THIS MISSION.

WHY was Jesus Christ sent by His Eternal Father? *He came to seek and to save that which was lost.*[1] This is also the mission of the priest. The work of redemption was to be accomplished on the Cross, but to prepare men to take advantage of it the Saviour abided three years instructing them by His teaching and edifying them by His example.

He instructs. Whenever our Saviour spoke to men it was with a view of instructing, converting and saving them. In His discourses nothing was said for effect, display or ostentation. He spoke only of the Kingdom of God: *Speaking of the Kingdom of God;*[2]—of the worth of a soul: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*[3]—of the duty of loving God: *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God;*[4]—of the necessity of denying and conquering self: *If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself;*[5]—of the happiness of those that mourn and are afflicted: *Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake.*[6]

[1] Luke xix. 10.
[2] Luke ix. 11.
[3] Matt. xvi. 26.
[4] Matt. xxii. 37.
[5] Matt. xvi. 24.
[6] Matt. v. 3.

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He edifies. The Saviour preached sublime and heroic virtues, but observe how perfectly He practised them in His own life! Blessed, He said, are the poor, —and who was ever so poor as He who had not whereon to lay His head? He was lavish of miracles when there was question of relieving the wants of others, and refused to work them when there was question of His own. He lived poor and died poorer, not having in His last moments as much as a glass of water to wet His parched lips, and having only the wood of the Cross for His deathbed.

He preached humility, and the prodigies of His own humility simply astound us. He, the King of Glory, came in the guise of a slave: *taking the form of a servant;*[1] He seems a man, but He is a worm of the earth, trod upon by men: *I am a worm and no man;*[2] He drank to the dregs the chalice of His bitterness: *He is filled with reproaches.*[3]

He preached mortification and self-denial, and He denied and crucified Himself in all things. His life was one uninterrupted series of labors and watchings, of fasts, privations and sorrows, culminating in the scourging, in the crowning with thorns and in the nailing to the cross: *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium.*

He preached meekness, and His meekness was so winning that it gained all hearts. He preached charity, and His charity was so comprehensive that it embraced all men, even the greatest of sinners. They bring to

[1] Philip. ii. 7. [2] Psal. xxi. 7.
[3] Lament. iii. 30.

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Him a woman taken in adultery. Woman, said He, hath no one condemned thee? No one, Lord. Then go in peace, neither will I condemn thee.

The charity of my Saviour included even His most bitter enemies. Judas by an act of the most shameless treachery betrayed Him with a kiss into the hands of His enemies, but Jesus spoke to him as to a friend: *Friend, whereunto art thou come?*[1] His inhuman executioners, after nailing Him to the cross, heaped upon Him insults and outrages and He prayed for them, and pardoned them: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*[2]

Thus Jesus never asked others to practise virtues of which He had not first given a perfect example, which He had not illustrated in His own person: *Jesus began to do and to teach,*[3] but He first began to do. His example and His teaching together contributed wonderfully to prepare hearts for the working of divine grace.

A priest should live as Christ did, in the midst of his people. It is not alone by absolution in the sacrament of penance that sinners are reconciled to God; their conversion is begun by salutary instruction, but above all by the example of a holy life. *Pasce verbo*, says St. Bernard, *pasce conversationis exemplo.*

1st. *Pasce Verbo.* You should preach when a seasonable opportunity offers, energetically or mildly as circumstances require, taking advantage of every occasion to teach men the truths of eternal life: *I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, by His coming and His kingdom: preach the word, be constant in*

[1] Matt. xxvi. 50. [2] Luke xxiii. 34. [3] Acts i. 1.

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season and out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.[1]

A minister of the Word should be equally at the service of all, for a pastor is a debtor to the lowly as well as to the great, to the poor as well as to the rich, and to the ignorant as well as to the learned. But it not unfrequently happens that the instruction of the poor of a parish and of the children is sadly neglected. Many priests willingly accept invitations to preach on great occasions before audiences where they will gain name and reputation; but they have a great dislike and aversion to that simple and familiar kind of teaching necessary for the instructing of children. They dislike to come down from their lofty heights and adapt themselves to the capacity of the ignorant, and, if I may so say, stutter and stammer in order to make themselves intelligible to the minds of children.

The Son of God Himself, in whom were all treasures of knowledge, lovingly bade little children to come unto Him, instructed them with infinite sweetness and spoke to them of God: *Suffer little children to come to Me.*[2]

[1] II. Tim. iv. 1.

[2] Luke xviii. 16. The illustrious and saintly Gerson spent the last years of his life in teaching catechism to children. Some worldly-wise persons thought this employment unbecoming a man who had been so prominent a figure in the world, and who still enjoyed so high a reputation. This is the answer of Gerson: *O bone Jesu quis ultra post te verecundabitur esse humilis ad parvulos, quando tu usque ad castissimos puerorum amplexus bracchia inclinas et circumligas?* Then adverting to the worth of these little ones, he cries out: *Absit ergo ut indignum sit parvulorum animas plantare et rigare. Venite igitur, parvuli, ad me; ego vobis doctrinam, vos mihi orationem impendetis. Sic angelos nostros vicissim lætificabimus.* (Lib. de Pueris ad Christ trahendis.)

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Having instructed the little children, Jesus went about teaching the people in the country, and appeared in Jerusalem in the midst of the Doctors of the Law and the chiefs of the nation, announcing the glad tidings of the Gospel with a holy liberty and an authority that bespoke His divinity: *As one having power.*[1] Do you, when you go into the pulpit and in the presence of the people, speak with that tone of conviction, with that ingenuous freedom, and with that dignified simplicity which become an embassador of the Most High?

Are you another Nathan before whom the princes of earth tremble and pale? Or a Daniel fulminating terrible decrees against modern Baltassars? Or a John the Baptist, coming out of the wilderness to preach penance? Or a Chrysostom or an Ambrose, an Augustine or a Bernard, whose mission was to vanquish heresy and subdue human passion by the power of their eloquence? I do not ask you if you have the knowledge and the other high gifts of these great men, but have you the faith which enlightens, the zeal which subdues, and the tender charity which ravishes and persuades? Are you possibly of those priests who fancy they are never preachers except when they are in the pulpit? Can you say with St. Paul, *I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you night and day?*[2] Do you take advantage of every opportunity to lead souls to God? When speaking to the unfortunate, do you console them, do you teach them to profit by their afflictions and to turn them into means of sanctification? When you go into the houses

[1] Matt. vii. 29. [2] Acts xx. 31.

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of the rich and the great of the world, do you, as Jesus Christ did on entering the house of Zaccheus, speak to them words of life and salvation? Do you at the proper time and place seize the occasion to introduce in the midst of the illusions of this age the great thought of eternity and prudently, yet with a holy freedom, call to mind the lesson of the text: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*[1] In a word, in the cabin of the peasant and the salon of the rich, dining with friends or preaching in the pulpit, in the Church or on the public highways, can you always be recognized as a preacher of the truth and a man of God?

Example! This is the most ingratiating of exordiums and the best preparation for any discourse. To give good example is the sacred duty of a pastor.

2d. *Pasce conversationis exemplo.* A priest having the Gospel, the Testament of the God-man, has in his hands all knowledge, all morality and all civilization; he has only to open and read and he will be encompassed with the treasures of knowledge and virtue of which the Church has made him the depository. His duty is to spread among the people all truth, religious and moral, which is the indispensable foundation of all virtue.

But bear in mind that the teaching of the priest, like that of Jesus Christ, should be twofold: first, he should teach by the example of his life; and next, by word of mouth. His life should be a visible, a living illus-

[1] Matt. xvi. 26.

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tration of his teaching. The Church has placed him in the midst of his people to be an example of the truth even more than its oracle. He may fail in speech, God may not have given him the gift of expression; and if so, his life should be a living sermon. No human tongue is so eloquent or so persuasive as sanctity. People are more moved by what they see than by what they hear.

Who is the best priest of a diocese? He who is the most gifted and most learned? No. He who is the most eloquent pulpit orator or whose confessional is surrounded by troops of penitents? No. But he who is the most edifying and most distinguished for genuine virtue, he of whom it can be said when dead: *He was a man mighty in word and work before God and all the people.*[1] Mighty in work, he was therefore mighty in word. Mighty before God, he was therefore mighty in his ministry before all the people.

Two things make a mighty workman in God's vineyard—miracles and SANCTITY. Miracles are rare in these days, because, the Church being now established, there is no longer any special need of them. Hence the priest must give force and authority to his ministry by the sanctity of his life. The example of a pastor is the book and the Gospel of most Christians. Country people particularly fully understand only the lessons that come to them through the eye: *Plenius opere docetur quam voce*, says St. Leo. The ancients said the same: *Longum iter per præcepta, breve et efficax per exemplum.* This axiom is verified daily. St.

[1] Luke xxiv. 19.

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Francis Regis was sent to evangelize the small town of Privas, which had been invaded by the Calvinists, who had grown to be both insolent and arrogant. At first he was laughed at and insulted even by Catholics who had been perverted by contact with heretics. As no one would listen to him, prayer and fasting were for a time the only weapons employed by him against the enemy. By and bye he added works of charity, he visited the sick, he stopped children by the wayside and spoke to them of God. They listened to him, followed him to the church, drawn by the charm of his manner and the sweetness of his speech. As time went on, the children induced their parents to come and the man of God at last saw himself surrounded by a large number of listeners. From enemies they had been gradually changed into friends, and both Catholics and heretics willingly listened to him. They admired his teaching, but much more his penitent and mortified life, his tireless patience and inexhaustible charity. They contrasted the Catholic priest with the Protestant minister, and their eyes were opened to the light. Francis won their hearts and made innumerable conversions.

Let us go and preach, said the seraphic St. Francis, one day, to one of his religious. They went out together and walked on in silence with their eyes modestly cast down. After having gone up and down the streets and through the public squares, they went back to the convent without having spoken a word to any one.

But, my father, said his companion to St. Francis, did you not say that you were going to preach? Ah,

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Brother, replied the Saint, and have we not preached? And as a matter of fact when men, weary of the tumult of the world and the excitement of the passions, see a saintly priest come among them whose grave and recollected air awakens in their minds the great thought of eternity, is not this for them a most eloquent sermon?

The apostolic men who in the past gained so many souls to God did not always work their conversion by great learning and eloquence; it was the example of their sublime virtues which gave such force and efficacy to their preaching. Theirs was a school in which the meaning of the Gospel-teaching was readily understood, because they were themselves an epitome of it, its illustration, and an exposition of its principles, suited to the capacity of all minds. As Tertullian said of the first Christians, their example was a summary of the Gospel: *Compendium evangelii.*

Priest of God, enter into yourself. Ask yourself if your conduct is an illustration of your teaching, and if, as St. Leo says, you preach more by deed than by word?

You say to the people: Lift up your hearts: *Sursum Corda;* leave the earth behind you; all there is worthless; one thing alone is necessary. What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Therefore, take no thought of time and think only of eternity.

This is what you teach, or rather what Jesus Christ teaches, but is your conduct a sermon that appeals to the senses, a living illustration of this teaching, its public and solemn promulgation? You preach detach-

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ment from the things of earth, and you yourself love money, and you rigorously exact what you call your rights and your *honoraria*. You bid others think of heaven, and you yourself build for earth; your very heart is sordid and wedded to the earth, and you are eager, shrewd and adroit in getting money and in securing for yourself other worldly advantages. You reproach the father of a family for giving his mind and heart to material interests, and for not looking after the interests of his soul. But he can reply: I know for whom I am toiling and saving; I have children, and I am trying to preserve and if possible increase their fortune. But, my dear Father, to whom will you leave the wealth you are hoarding? *Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*[1] Alas, the poor priest can make no answer: *He storeth up, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things.*[2]

Souls, souls, these are what the priest should seek after and long for. Riches, gold and silver, these are not for him; let him leave all these to those who have no hope beyond the grave: *I seek not the things that are yours*, said St. Paul, *but you.*[3] Purity of motive such as this will give force to his words, which will then be supported and reinforced by the authority of his example.

You tell your people: *They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences*,[4] while it is clear to every one that you shrink from privation and suffering. You live in an elegant home,

[1] Luke xii. 20.
[2] Psalm xxxviii. 7.
[3] 2 Cor. xii. 14.
[4] Gal. v. 24.

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sumptuously and tastefully fitted up; your table is supplied with every delicacy and you welcome whatever will make life pleasant and enjoyable. Your people ask themselves: Which are we to adopt as our rule of life, the teaching of our pastor or his example?

The mission of a priest is to make acceptable a teaching which is directly opposed to human opinion and carnal sense, and to subdue the passions by a discipline of sacrifice and self-denial. How can he prove that such a doctrine is possible in practice? By cheerfully and joyously taking upon himself a yoke more galling than that which he lays upon others. The great secret of Christian eloquence consists in persuading weak minds, which are very numerous, that the sacrifices which virtue demands are in truth a source of joy and sweetest consolation. To do this cold reasoning is of little avail; example is the argument that cannot be gainsaid or resisted. Our Saviour did not say to His Disciples: Read, study, reason; but *observe and do: inspice et fac. I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also.*[1] The priest should say: Look at me, and you will learn the teaching of the Gospel with regard to poverty and riches, glory and humiliation, pleasures and pain: *Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*[2]

Like his Divine Master the priest should be a pattern of all the virtues he preaches to others. But the virtue which should especially distinguish him, which should set him apart and make him unlike any one else, is zeal; zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of

[1] John xiii. 15. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 16.

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souls is preeminently the characteristic of a holy priest and an apostolic man. Every energy of his priestly life ought to be directed to the acquiring of this virtue, and hence it is proper that it should form the subject of our serious meditation.

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Section Second.

Zeal.

The Holy Ghost makes use of whatever is most striking and sublime in nature to typify zeal and the power and enthusiasm of those magnanimous souls whom He raised up for the conversion of peoples and the salvation of nations.

Now He compares them to the stars in the firmament which, in their appointed courses and in the rapidity of their movements, show forth and proclaim the glory of the Most High: *The heavens show forth the glory of God.*[1] Again, He compares them to the sun, because like that body they diffuse their light over all the earth: *The sun giving light hath looked upon all things.*[2] Again, He compares them to beneficent clouds, bearing everywhere life and fertility: *Who are these that fly as clouds?*[3] Again, they are as thunderbolts let loose upon sinners: *Thy lightnings enlightened the world.*[4] Again, they are as piercing arrows shot by the hands of an Omnipotent God, transfixing the hearts of His enemies and subduing them to His authority: *Like arrows in the hand of the Mighty One.*[5] Finally they are as rushing winds which go forth from end to end of the earth with incredible velocity and penetrate everywhere, or as roaring flames gaining fresh energy from the food which their own activity supplies: *Who makest Thy angels spirits, and Thy ministers a burning fire.*[6]

Such are the magnificent effects of priestly zeal.

Let us now show the necessity of zeal. Then we shall go on to consider its excellence and its characteristics.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY OF ZEAL.

WHEN we give ourselves and all our strength and energy to the work of saving souls and leading them

[1] Psal. xviii. 22. [2] Ecclus. xlii. 16. [3] Isai. lx. 8.
[4] Psal. lxxvi. 19. [5] Psal. cxix. 4. [6] Psal. ciii. 4.

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back to God their Creator, we are said, in the language of the Church, to have zeal. This virtue is simply indispensable to the priest, and he is constantly reminded of its necessity by everything in him and about him—by Jesus Christ, who has chosen him to aid in carrying on the work of the redemption of the human race; by the people, who look to him for instruction and the other aids necessary to work out their salvation; by the Church, which, in calling him to her ministry, laid upon him the duty of taking up her defence and committed to his hands the most sacred interests of her children.

I.

When Jesus Christ sends a workman into His vineyard, He does so that he may cultivate it and make it bring forth fruits of grace and sanctification: *I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*[1] The life of a priest is a life of labor and suffering; he cannot remain idle and be guiltless. Every name applied to him by the Saviour of the world implies toil and hardship. He is called a soldier, because he must battle for the conquest of souls; a fisher of men, because he must put out to sea and let down his net to rescue those who are drowning in the waves; a harvester, because to gather in the harvest he must courageously bear the burden of the day and the heats; a steward, because he must render a most rigorous account of his stewardship; a pastor, because he must scale mountain and

[1] John xv. 16.

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precipice in search of sheep that have gone astray, and bring them back to the fold; he is, as St. Paul says, a debtor to all, to the weak and the strong, the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the unwise. Such is the priest.

Therefore, being a priest, I am a man of God, charged with whatever pertains to His honor and glory. I must make Him known and loved; I must rescue and bring back to Him the sheep whom the devil has seized; I cannot save myself alone because my salvation is inseparably bound up with the salvation of others. If I give all my strength and energy, if I sacrifice my health, and devote my entire life to the work of spreading the kingdom of God and gaining souls, I do no more than my bounden duty. I only discharge a debt and fulfil an imperative obligation: *For if I preach the Gospel, it is no glory to me, for a necessity lieth upon me; for woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.*[1]

Now, answer me this. Can a priest of Jesus Christ, who is sent into the world to discharge the duties of his priestly office, and to labor for the spread of the Kingdom of God, see the kingdom of Satan taking possession of a portion of the flock entrusted to him and remain unconcerned? Can he remain content, undisturbed and at peace, although his conscience may not reprove him with any personal guilt, and be a witness to the disorders and scandals of those who have been entrusted to his keeping? What? Can he fancy that he loves Jesus Christ whose place he holds,

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 16.

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that he is a priest after the heart of his Divine Master, and all the while stand idly by and in cold blood see his Lord outraged before his eyes and daily crucified anew by a people for whose conduct he himself must render a strict account? Shame! do not talk to me of such a priest. He is no representative of God the Saviour, he is an usurper who bears an honorable name which he belies. He may outwardly put on the semblance of holiness, but for all that what is he but a vessel of reprobation and shame in the Temple of God? He is base and faithless and shamelessly betrays the cause of his Master.

No, no, it is not enough to have the fire of divine love burning in our own hearts; we must spread it abroad and kindle its sacred flame in the hearts of those about us.

Look at Jesus Christ, our Divine Model, of whose priesthood we are the continuators. What thought did He keep before His mind all the days of His mortal life? What did He seek and yearn for? To glorify His Father, to make Him known and loved and adored by every creature; this was His life, this was His constant longing; it was the hunger that consumed, the thirst that devoured Him; it so possessed Him, that He took no heed of the repugnance of nature and was deaf to its cravings. It was a cruel and frightful thing for our Lord to come down from heaven, to live in humility and poverty and to die upon the gibbet of a malefactor. But His thought was: My Father will be glorified and the human race, the object of His love, will be redeemed and saved. This is enough;

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let Me die, then, let Me make the sacrifice. Priest of the living God, "*look and make according to the pattern.*"

II.

The people, for the saving of whom the priest is sent, also constantly remind him of the necessity of zeal.

To spend himself for the sanctification of souls, this is the primary, the most imperative duty of a pastor, his duty day by day, nay, every minute of the day. And is not this a duty which should inspire all his actions, guide him in the exercise of his authority, and be the fixed and only purpose of his every movement? If, impelled by faith and charity, he does not use every effort to bring back the erring; if he does not exhort and entreat them; if he does not reprove them with mildness or severity as the occasion demands; if he does not teach the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful and encourage the righteous; if he does not, like Moses on the Mount, lift up pure hands to heaven to placate the offended justice of God and bring down the dew of divine mercy upon the people committed to his keeping,—if he does not do all this, then he is no pastor, he is but a statue; he is not a father, he is but an alien and a mercenary.

And yet, sad to say, how many lazy pastors there are who, instead of being set on fire with holy zeal by the scandals and disorders they see on every side of them, gradually get into the way of looking upon them without giving them a thought; they grow familiar

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with even so sad a spectacle; they are unmoved by what should make their very souls shudder, and they end by making light of it all and regarding such a condition of things as a necessary evil which has gone on so long that it is now past remedy.

A priest is sent by his bishop into some country parish. What does he find there? An ignorant and brutalized people, men who bring from our cities in exchange for their products only shameless vices and stupid impieties.

Here is indeed a vast field for the zeal of a man of God. Here are ignorant souls to be instructed, souls wedded to earth and forgetful of their immortal destiny to be lifted into a higher life. But, says the pastor, what will you have me do? The evil is so great that I cannot hope to correct it.—You have not tried to correct it, and how can you say it is impossible?—All the efforts of my predecessors were labor spent in vain; these people are so degraded that they will not listen to one who speaks to them of their religious duties; their impiety is such that it has made them stupid, brutal, intractable.—Among so many erring souls you will surely find some who will listen to you. There will be some sick soul who will be ready to reveal to you his wounds, and allow you to apply the balm of healing; but you must make the advance, you must give him courage.—What you say is all very well; but the truth is they simply despise my ministry, scoff at my solicitude and zeal, and deride my charitable efforts.—How can you say that? True, you may have made some feeble, half-hearted efforts to win them,

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and having failed you have shut yourself up in your room, there to pine away in solitude; you are a stranger in your parish; you don't know your own people; and you shirk the annoyance and trouble of an active and laborious ministry. You should visit those who have strayed away, make the first friendly advance, speak kindly and affectionately to them, and by an agreeable and pleasant address win your way to their hearts. But this is precisely what you do not do; if you meet them on the street, they are to you no more than acquaintances, and, instead of greeting them pleasantly and as a father, you give them a cold and formal salute; whereas you should converse with them of their business, in order to get an opportunity to speak to them of the one important business of life; or of their labor and toil, in order to teach them how these may be to them a source of merit; or of their trials and sorrows, in order to point out that these, if borne in a patient spirit, though bitter while they last, will be to them a fount of infinite sweetness.—Well, I speak to them Sunday by Sunday; I instruct them, entreat them, exhort them, but my words are only an empty sound, lost in space, seed that falls on stony ground and among briers and thorns.—Yes, but how can you hope to move them if you don't reach their hearts? You don't speak to them in a language they understand, nor do you give them such instruction as is suited to their needs. You get out of some musty author sermons that can do them no possible good, and even if they could be of service to them, they would be spoiled by your lifeless delivery; or, if you

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write your sermons, you give little thought to their preparation, nor do you adapt them to the wants of your people, nor in delivering them do you speak with that ring of sincerity and conviction that penetrates and stirs, startles and frightens the hearts of your hearers. Your sermons are nothing more than commonplace, insipid remarks, carelessly thrown out among your hearers, so slovenly in diction and so wretchedly delivered that they are simply a disgrace to the majestic truths of the Gospel. And then you affect to be surprised that your ministry is barren and your sermons without fruit!

In the mean time those idle, indolent priests stifle the voice of conscience and slumber on in dangerous and deplorable security. They are quite undisturbed and hedge themselves about with what they are pleased to call their regularity.

Regularity! How can you call it by that name, since, while you conform externally to certain rules proper to your state of life, your conduct is in reality a violation of their spirit? And why? Because you are the light of the world, and you extinguish the flame that should dissipate the surrounding darkness. Because you are the salt of the earth, and you do not stand between innocence and corruption, between piety and pretence. Because you are sent to cultivate a field overrun with briers and thorns, and you do nothing to clear them away and make the soil productive. Because you ought to save your brethren, and they perish while you stand by looking on.

My God, why then did we become priests? To

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pass our days in ease, in indolence and pleasure? Did we enter the gate of the sanctuary solely to convert a ministry essentially divine into an agency of personal aggrandizement and temporal prosperity? When the First Pastor of the diocese said to us: *Go ye into My vineyard*, did we look forward to the parish to be entrusted to us as a place in which we hoped to increase our bank account and whet our avarice? *Nulla animarum lucra quærimus*, said St. Gregory, *susceptæ benedictionis ministerium vertimus ad ambitionis argumentum. Dei causas relinquimus, ad terrena negotia vacamus.*

But you will say: If your view is correct, the priesthood, the pastoral office, is a very difficult calling, a weighty and insupportable burden.

Do we, who have been chosen by Jesus Christ to help Him and cooperate with Him in the work of saving souls, dare hold such language as this in the presence of the Crucifix? At what a terrible price did our Divine Master purchase the salvation of souls? Did He shrink at any sacrifice when there was question of saving us from hell? If He had allowed the thought of His own ease, or the dread of difficulty or danger, to deter Him, what would have been the lot of the human family? If He had not courageously and magnanimously given Himself up to reproaches, torments and death, where would be now that abounding redemption for which we are indebted to His sacred wounds?

Yes, some one will say, but one must preserve his strength and look to his health. Certainly, no one

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will find fault with a reasonable prudence on this score; in fact, it is to be commended. By all means preserve your health and strength, and for what? To fritter them away in a long and useless life of ease and indolence? Or rather to give them with lavish generosity to the service of God and your neighbor? And what better and more noble use can you make of them than to employ them in instructing the ignorant, in visiting the sick, in comforting the sorrowful; laboring by day and by night for the great mission God has committed to you?

But you say again: If I give myself up to the impetuosity of such inconsiderate zeal I shall soon be worn out and my days will be shortened. I do not tell you to be indiscreet or to attempt the impossible. And even if the noble toil of the apostolic ministry should shorten your pilgrimage by some years, would that be such a frightful calamity? Will the sun in the heavens cease to shine because your light has been extinguished? Or will the universe go to pieces because of your death? Did you enter the priesthood to drag out here on earth a long and worthless life? Did the Apostles or those who followed in their footsteps fritter away their lives with such wretched anxieties and excuses? Did they leave off working because of such childish fears? Do the soldiers in the armies of the world refuse to fight because they fear to meet death on the field of battle? Do not the votaries of vanity and deceit daily expose themselves to dangers infinitely more imminent; do they not risk their lives on land and sea in quest of perishable goods? *They indeed*

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that they may receive a corruptible crown. And will you be less generous and courageous when there is question of gaining souls to heaven, and of securing for yourself an immortal crown? *But we an incorruptible one.*[1]

See how easy it is to deceive yourself and become the sport of your self-love. In youth you put from you the thought of shaking off your idleness and sloth until the maturity of manhood. Then, you said to yourself, I shall set bravely to work to do my full duty. When you grew to be a man you did not change; the years went by and finally old age came on. Thus your whole life slipped away without your having done anything great or generous, always allowing the present moment to escape in the vain hope of profiting by the future, which is not at your disposal and which it is quite possible you may never see.

O priests of God, O shepherds of souls, to think that the sword of the Word, the ministry of grace and all the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ are yours and that you should bury so rich a treasure! To possess means so potent and not to make use of them in saving the multitudinous souls that are perishing! Oh, what an unworthy betrayal of a sacred trust, what injustice to your brethren, what unfaithfulness to Holy Mother Church!

III.

The Church on earth is an army drawn up in battle array. She has set up her tents here, but this is not

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 25.

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her abiding-place. She is a wayfarer on her journey to heaven, her fatherland and the home of her rest. Numerous and powerful enemies assail her, they give her no truce, they close in upon her without ceasing from every side. All her sons are soldiers and should be ever under arms and ready for the conflict. But when her peril is most threatening, when the enemy redoubles his attacks, how can they who, by their position and calling, should be her stoutest defenders, slumber in their places and lay down their arms?

It is said that when the Commonwealth is in danger every citizen is a soldier. Now, look about you and note the condition of the Church in nearly every country of Europe. She is no longer honored and protected; on the contrary, her condition is precarious and uncertain; she is at the mercy of the whims and the passions of men. She is an object of distrust and unjust suspicion; she is continually watched and denounced, calumniated and robbed of her most sacred rights, nay, her very existence is menaced. The sophisms of the unbeliever, the lies and misrepresentations of the sectaries, the prejudices of the multitude, the jealousies of the powerful, the trickery of politicians, pride, hatred, unworthy passions, whatever is most impious and most malicious, all are heaped together and turned loose in the diabolical crusade against the Son of God and His Church.

The immortal St. Basil, contemplating the evils that afflicted the Spouse of Christ in his day, was dismayed and saddened by the sight. His sufferings and sorrows, added to his incessant toil, had reduced him to a

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shadow; still he fought on with insuperable firmness to the last day of his life, and never ceased to stand as a wall of bronze against the formidable assaults of the world and the devil. His friend, St. Gregory Nazianzen, tells us that he was often heard to cry out: *Ubi Deus periclitatur et causa illius proponitur, tunc, alia omnia pro nihilo reputantes, ipsum solum intuemur.*

Such was also the spirit of a St. Athanasius, who almost alone sustained the struggle of a world in conspiracy against the truth of which he was the intrepid champion; of a St. Augustine, who fought hand to hand against Paganism and a thousand other heresies and overcame them all by the relentless force of his powerful reasoning; of a St. Dominic and St. Vincent Ferrer, who generously underwent incredible toil to win back what the Church had lost, and to recall her degenerate sons to the austere purity of pristine morality; and finally of a St. Francis Xavier and a St. Francis de Sales, the former of whom, in converting the heathen, bathed with his sweat the vast regions of India and Japan; while the latter scaled and traversed the mountains of Savoy to bring back the heretics of that country to the bosom of the Church.

Did those apostles, and many others whom I could name, receive a priesthood different from ours? or were they soldiers of another Master than Him whom we serve?

But perhaps the errors of those times were more dangerous than those of our day, and the needs of the Church in consequence more constraining, demanding

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from her ministers a more perfect devotion and a more ardent zeal?

Every age has had its own peculiar heresies, but those heresies were directed against only some particular dogmas and poisoned only some branches of the tree of truth. To-day, however, there is abroad the universal heresy of unbelief which lays the axe to the very root of the tree. It scoffs at divine authority, denies a supernatural order and deifies human reason. The master heresy of our age is rationalism in its widest sense—a vast sepulchre in which all beliefs and convictions lie buried.

And do not our hearts bleed and is not our zeal set on fire by the sight of ravages such as these? Will we refuse to stand as a breakwater against this devastating torrent which sweeps away in its course to the foul depths below our faith and morals, nay, even the last vestiges of an expiring social order? You will say to me: What is to be done? We are not all apostles or prophets or doctors; we are not all called to convert kingdoms and renew the face of Christendom: *Are all Apostles? Are all prophets? Are all doctors?*[1]

Quite true, we have not all received the same gifts, nor are we all intended to discharge the same offices: *one after this manner, one after that*, but each should labor according to the measure of the gifts he has received from heaven.

You may not be able to write eloquent apologies or demonstrate in learned dissertations the agreement of faith and reason; or develop the divine harmonies and

[1] I. Cor. xii. 29.

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the admirable economy of religion; or set forth Catholicism as an emanation from God for the purpose of bringing all creation into unity, diffusing torrents of light and love over all the earth, and opening up to regenerate humanity a vast career of perfection and progress; but even without so profound a knowledge as this, without conceptions so grand and sublime, you can still be an apostle in the midst of your people.

Is it then so difficult a task to preach with dignified simplicity the mysteries of faith and the morality of the Gospel? Is it so difficult to teach children the catechism and to instill into their hearts the truths of religion, the fear of God and the love of virtue? Is it so difficult to receive with fatherly affection poor sinners who come to seek a remedy for their evils in the sacrament of reconciliation?

Yes, but there are none about the pulpit to listen to the words of truth, there are no children to receive instructions, and the tribunal of penance is deserted.

Even so, can you not at least humble yourself in God's presence and weep and mourn between the vestibule and the Altar, and thus do a great service to the Church by making for her of your prayers a shield of defence? Zeal, zeal is all that is wanted, and once we have it we shall find a thousand ways of discharging our obligations to the Spouse of Jesus Christ.

If we were all fervid and zealous priests we should soon restore to the Church all her pristine beauty and ancient splendor. I know not what may be the designs of God upon Europe, which the Gospel civilized and made for so long prosperous and happy. To-day we

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see it menaced by its vices and ravaged by the monster of impiety and indifference; but if it is not irrevocably lost, if the torch of faith, which while it will never be extinguished, now gives out only a feeble and uncertain light, is to again burn afresh, this happy change will be brought about only by priests of the Altar who are content to forego all earthly interests and have God alone for their inheritance, and who, like the swift and ever-ready angels of whom the Prophet speaks, will go from city to city, from village to village, Crucifix in hand, demonstrating to a people grown old in corruption that they still have the charity, the disinterestedness and the zeal of the first Apostles: *Go, ye swift angels, to a nation rent and torn in pieces, to a terrible people.*[1]

Now that we are fully convinced of the necessity of zeal, let us see what are its merits and its excellences.

[1] Isai. xviii. 2.

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CHAPTER II.

EXCELLENCE OF ZEAL.

CHARITY is the first and most excellent of virtues, and zeal is its perfection; which is equivalent to saying that of all things inspired by divine love, zeal is the purest in motive, the noblest in purpose, and the most heroic in achievement.

I.

Zeal is whatever in divine love is purest in motive.

What is zeal? It is the outgrowth of faith, the expression of sacrifice, the warmth of devotion, says St. Ambrose: *Hic est Dei zelus; hic est fidei vapor, devotionis fervor.* Zeal, says William of Paris, is a burning flame lighted at the hearth of heaven, which melts the hearts of apostolic men, and breaks forth from the bosom to carry with it the fire of divine love into distant lands: *Flamma ferventissima de ipsa fornace spiritus sancti.* It is the fulness of love, overflowing from the heart, which impels us to cry out with St. Augustine: *Magnificate dominum mecum, nolo solus magnificare Dominum, nolo solus amare, nolo solus amplecti.*

A zealous priest is one who ardently desires that God should be known, loved and glorified, and that all

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men should be saved. He is one who is ready to make every sacrifice and to endure all things to extend the kingdom of God and fill up the number of the elect. This was the habitual disposition of St. Paul, who said, in writing to the faithful of Corinth: *I will most gladly spend and myself be spent for your souls.*[1]

To snatch souls from the devil and restore them to Jesus Christ, who purchased them with His blood, was the one thought that filled the mind of this great Apostle. To him everything else was small and vile and despicable, not worthy to engage his attention or claim his thought.

Look at him as he enters Athens. What is it that most attracts his attention in that great city? Is it the name and glory which splendid achievements and the magnificent productions of human genius had won for her? No, he sees only the frightful condition to which her errors and her vices had reduced her. His heart was rent within him and he was seized with a vehement and impetuous desire, which he could not resist or control, to rescue that blinded people from the darkness of idolatry and the slavery of their passions: *His spirit was stirred within him.* How strong and vivid that expression! Can you not almost fancy that you see the heart of this man of God all on fire and his great soul leaping forward to snatch these unfortunate people from eternal perdition? *His spirit was stirred within him, seeing the city wholly given to idolatry.*[2]

Fancy in St. Paul's place a vain and frivolous priest drawn by curiosity to this home of the arts. He would love to gaze upon the proud monuments of that cele-

[1] II. Cor. xii. 15. [2] Acts xvii. 16.

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brated city and to witness the magnificence of its citizens. St. Paul took no notice of these treasures, so precious to others, save to deplore the abuses of which they were the instruments. His heart was at once borne up to God, who was unknown in that city and whom he desired to announce to its citizens. Hence he broke forth into that eloquent and sublime discourse which resounded through the Areopagus and produced such marvellous effects. Such also was the zeal of a Francis Xavier when he wrote from the heart of India these words: The thought often comes to me to return and to go up and down Europe weeping and crying out to the Universities of learning, and especially to that of Paris, and to say to those men to whom knowledge is more than charity: Oh, how many souls you could save who will one day reproach you for having allowed them to be lost! The more living the love of God is in the heart the more ardent will be its zeal. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi used to cry out in the excess of her love: My God, if it were only my good fortune to go to India or among the Turks to announce Thy divine law to children, to the simple of heart and gain souls to Thee! In the discharge of so gracious and magnificent a work all labors of body and trials of mind would seem to me light and sweet.

Zeal, then, being the flower of charity and the enthusiasm of love, can anything be purer in motive? And can anything have a higher purpose?

II.

The purpose of zeal is to fulfil the eternal designs of God upon men. Who are those men for whose sal-

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vation you labor? They are immortal beings, this is their greatness; they are purchased with the blood of a God, this is their worth; they are destined to possess and glorify God forever in heaven, this is their end. Now to enable them to secure this glorious end, is not this the grandest, the most sublime work to which mortal man can put his hand and give his life?

An earthly king can make man happy for a time, but you have it in your power to make him happy forever. Almsdeeds is certainly a most excellent work, it assuages for a while the pains and sufferings of the needy and sweetens life. But when you heal the wounds of an afflicted soul he will live on and enjoy forever the blessings of your beneficence. A ruler, a warrior, a statesman are all useful, because they contribute, each in his way, to the defence, prosperity, and glory of their country; but what are they as compared with an apostolic man who labors to save souls and to augment the magnificence of his heavenly country?

Contemplation is a high and holy exercise, and one of marvellous excellence; it is glorious to go up with Moses to the summit of the mountain and there contemplate God face to face, receive His divine teachings, and speak with Him as friend with friend. But to pass from contemplation to action, to go out from the cloud of light and come down from the heights of Sinai, bearing in one's hands the tables of the Law; to present them to the people, who are gathered below and to expound them,—is not this the sublimest height of dignity and greatness to which weak and mortal man can possibly be raised?

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God does not work externally save for His own glory and the salvation of His elect. The priest cooperates in carrying out this great design of Eternal Wisdom, and, as Peter De Blois beautifully expresses it, while God did not call any one to aid Him in the work of creation, He wished to have the assistance of others in the work of redemption: *In opere creationis non fuit qui adjuvaret Spiritum Domini, aut conciliarius ejus esset; in mysterio vero redemptionis nostræ, voluit habere coadjutores.* St. Denis, the Areopagite, well says that the most divine of all divine works is to cooperate with God in the saving of souls: *Omnium divinorum divinissimum esse, Dei cooperatorem fieri.* Nothing is nobler than zeal directed to such a work.

I also said that of all things zeal is the most heroic in achievement.

III.

As a matter of fact the zeal of men who suffer themselves to be led by the inspirations of grace is ardent, invincible, measureless, insatiable.

Observe the Apostles when they come out from the Upper Chamber. The Holy Ghost had come down into their hearts and kindled a fire which they could not check. They go forth to preach the divinity of Christ to men still purpled with His blood. The Synagogue takes alarm, grows furious and breaks into a tempest of rage. Speak not in this Name, they said, or you will bring down terrible chastisements upon your heads. What did the Apostles reply? *We cannot but speak.* Pharisees, high-priests, do not attempt the impossible.

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You may put us in chains, you may thrust us into dungeons, you may scourge us and put us to death with extremest torture, but as long as the breath of life is in us you cannot keep us from publishing abroad that which we have seen and heard, or from carrying out the commands given us by our Divine Master, or from laboring for the salvation of our brethren: *We cannot but speak.*[1]

Judea is too narrow for the zeal that consumes them. They divide the world among them, and set out to carry the good tidings of the Gospel to all peoples. Hell raves, the world is in a turmoil, and all nations combine against them. Pyres are lighted, gibbets are set up and beasts of prey are let loose upon them in the amphitheatres. All this does not help matters: they go forward in the face of danger; the sword, the torch cannot stay their onward course, and they are found wherever hearts are to be won and souls are to be saved.

It was indeed a strange and extraordinary spectacle to see twelve poor ignorant fishermen, armed only with the Word of God and the wood of the Cross, declaring war against all the powers of the world and against the seething passions of men; preaching poverty to the rich, humility to the philosopher and penance to men immersed in luxury and the gratifications of sense. This was to turn the world upside down and to demolish all the idols of the past; it was to eradicate inveterate ideas, change established customs and give to the world a new aspect. The resistance was long,

[1] Acts iv. 20.

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obstinate and terrible, and frightful were the shock, the confusion and the conflict. But in the end the world and the devil were vanquished; ancient paganism was swept away; the idols and false gods were cast down from the altars which they had so long usurped; the Cross was set up on the summit of Rome's proud Capitol, and the world, shaking itself free from the corruptions of the past, saw a glorious sight—chastity and innocence going forth triumphant through a cleansed and purified earth.

Such is the heroism of zeal. Consider it for a moment. It never shrinks before any difficulty, it never says enough, it never ceases to go forward as long as work is to be done and souls are to be saved.

Other virtues may deteriorate, at times they are transformed into vices, and again they are carried to excess in measure and degree. Thus the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the Wise Man forbids us to be over-just: *Be not over-just;*[1] and St. Paul bids us observe moderation and sobriety in knowledge and wisdom: *Be wise unto sobriety.*[2]

But zeal, which is a desire to glorify God and save men, knows no bounds. Possessing in itself whatever is most living, ardent and energetic in the love of God, it leaps forth from the prison of the heart, traverses all lands and embraces all peoples: *Amor æstuat, seipsum non capit, immensiatatem æmulatur.* Observe again St. Francis Xavier in the Indies. After having converted immense kingdoms to Jesus Christ, he cries out: *Quis mihi det ut moriar pro te, ut cognoscant te omnes*

[1] Eccles. vii. 17. [2] Rom. xii. 3.

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fines terræ? My God, why can I not multiply myself and my labors? Why cannot I sacrifice a thousand lives and undergo a thousand deaths to make Thee known and loved by all the peoples of the earth? I am far away from thee, dear Europe, but you are ever in my thoughts and encompassed by my love. I weep and sigh for thee, and unceasingly offer prayers to heaven for the conversion of the heretics who are rending thy bosom. To you, O children of India, I have taught the catechism; to you, O sons of Japan, I have preached the doctrine of eternal salvation; and to you, O dwellers in far-away China, who in spurning the Gospel refuse what would be your light and your joy, I stretch out my arms in my yearning to embrace you; and, did I know of other peoples, I would hasten to go among them, and I would wish even at the peril of my life to make Thee known and loved, O my God, to all the nations of the earth: *Quis mihi det ut moriar pro te, ut cognoscant te omnes fines terræ.*

How can we describe the heart of a zealous priest? I know no words more to the purpose than those of Cassiodorus: *Machinam parvam, gravidam mundo, cœlum gestabile, compendium orbis;* an organ which, though small, embraces within itself the whole world; a heaven which is borne about, and whose graces and blessings are as ubiquitous as the light of the sun; a universe in miniature.

Can I find in all this a likeness of myself? Have I at least some little spark of burning and boundless zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls? Alas, I scarcely dare question my heart on this point, and

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yet I must have zeal; with me this is an affair of life and death, for where there is no zeal there is no love, says St. Ambrose: *Qui non zelat, non amat.* And if I have not love I am nothing, I am stricken with death, I am a corpse: *He that loveth not abideth in death.*[1]

O my God, I am fully convinced of this; there is no middle way between being zealous and being accursed. Light in our hearts, then, the flame of that sacred fire which alone can infuse life into our works and make fruitful our ministry among the people. Inspire us with zeal, a truly priestly zeal, such as St. Bernard depicts in these words: *Zelum tuum inflammet charitas, informet scientia, firmet constantia.*

[1] I. John iii. 14.

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CHAPTER III.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ZEAL.

1. *The Example of Our Lord.*

WHAT was the life of our Saviour but a continuous exercise of the most ardent, the most perfect zeal? His Blessed Mother was the first to experience its happy effects. In the very moment in which He was conceived in the chaste womb of this incomparable Virgin, He enriched her with fresh graces and raised her to the sublimest height of perfection. He carried a blessing to the house of Zachary and sanctified His precursor in the womb of St. Elizabeth. He was but just born in the stable at Bethlehem when He drew to His cradle the shepherds and the Magi, the representatives of Jew and Gentile, that is, of the whole human family. Still a babe, He passed over to Egypt to destroy idolatry and to bring to a people encompassed with the darkness of error the light and the knowledge of God. During the three years He spent in going up and down Judea, preaching to men in the temple and by the wayside, His days were given to labor and His nights to prayer. A divine power dwelt in Him, but He used it only to heal the diseases of the body and the still more dangerous diseases of the soul. He

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exercised this zeal everywhere, in cities and towns, indoors and out, openly and in secret; all were equally its recipients, high and low, rich and poor, old and young. He stopped to save an unfortunate woman of wicked life and ill repute, and forgot in this gracious work the cravings of hunger.

This zeal was most conspicuous and luminous during His passion and death. Who can form the least conception of the sorrows, the outrages and the ignominies He underwent for the salvation of men, and that, too, without showing the least resentment or impatience against those who were heaping upon Him every worst indignity. They cursed and He blessed, they shed His blood and He lovingly sprinkled it over His executioners, and when expiring on the Cross uttered this prayer for them: *Father, forgive them. I thirst.* He said, but it was a thirst for the salvation of souls that consumed Him.

Finally, to rescue us from the slavery of the devil, and to gain for us a wealth of grace and glory, the Word-made-Flesh passed through a limitless sea of unspeakable torture and extremest agony from the time He was born in Bethlehem until He expired on Calvary. He took away, says St. Paul, the malediction which we had incurred, visiting it upon His own head, and making Himself, as it were, the object of the curse: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;*[1] and again: *Him that knew no sin, for us He hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in Him.*[2] This is surely a pure, an

[1] Gal. iii. 13. [2] II. Cor. v. 21.

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ardent, a generous zeal. Let us see if ours has any such characteristics.

2. *Application.*

Zeal is revealed in its effects. There is no fire without heat. Now, tell me, is the fire within us felt by those about us? Is the purpose and scope of our labors and whatever we do to carefully cultivate the field entrusted to us; to instruct the ignorant, to bring back the erring and to strengthen and support the righteous?

You tell me that in your parish faith is gradually becoming extinct, that the sacraments are not frequented, that the laws of the Church are spurned and despised; that vice has usurped the place of virtue, and that everything is languishing, decaying and going to the bad. But if the wolf is ravaging the flock, whose fault is it? Is it not the fault of the pastor who instead of watching is droning and slumbering?

No, you say, I am up and doing, I discharge with exactness all the duties of my ministry, and, what is more, I am zealous.

You zealous! You!—You mistake for zeal what is only the effect of a restless temperament and an impetuous character. Instead of having for unfortunate sinners a kind word and a tender heart, you meet them with menaces on your tongue and a scourge in your hand. You are a son of thunder and would draw down lightning from heaven upon the Samaritans.

But, you add, I hate iniquity and I cannot stand by and in cold blood be a witness to scandals and disorders. And does not God hate sin with an im-

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measurable, an everlasting, an infinite hatred? And yet see how patient He is, and how forbearing towards the sinner. He waits for the sinner to repent; He does more: He goes forward to meet him; He calls him; He anticipates him with His grace. Adam, where art thou? Adam flees; God pursues him, He heads him off, He lies in wait for him and, if I may say so without irreverence, He blocks the way to prevent his escape. As a Father says: *Fugientes apprehendit.*

And all this He does while He is still the God of the Old Law, the God of the Law of Fear. But now that He is the God of the New Law, the Law of Love, He exhausts all the resources of charity, all the gracious condescensions of mercy to win back sinners. He converses with them; He eats with them; He suffers Himself to be called their friend; His love lays snares for their feet; He draws them by the golden fetters of His love, *in vinculis charitatis.* He is no longer the God of the thunders of Sinai, He is the Son of the Virgin-Mother, who ravishes and subdues the multitude by His winning grace and the sweet persuasion of His speech, receives poor sinners with ineffable kindness and bids them, by their conversion, make glad the saints about the Throne in heaven.

Is this your idea of zeal? Does your charity take on every form? Does it go out to all your erring brethren? Do you labor in season and out of season for their salvation? Do you promptly welcome them no matter whence they come, even though they differ from you in all things not essentially of faith?

You have zeal! Well, what are you doing to bring

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back those who have wandered away? What means are you taking to revive faith in your parish? During all the hours of the day your parishioners see and hear the apostles of vice and impiety, whereas they see and hear you only at long intervals, at most once a week, on Sundays. You never visit them in their homes to break to them the bread of life, as did the first Apostles, and as priests do now whose zeal is inspired by charity.

What attractions, what inducements do you hold out to gain souls to God? Possibly you have not a confraternity, a pious association in your parish, or if there is one, it is dying of inanition, because you do not encourage it and give it your support. Whatever tends to feed and nourish piety is overlooked by you, neglected, possibly despised.

You tell me you wish your parishioners to discharge the duties that are essential and enjoined upon all Christians before they give themselves to works that are not of precept and are unnecessary. Yes, but do you not see that they will soon leave off doing works that are of strict obligation to all and essential for salvation, if their fervor is not fed and kept alive by works that are not of precept and are even in a sense superfluous?

The Church is a vast Christian family. Individuals are lost sight of and swallowed up in this great multitude. Do you wish to interest them and kindle their fervor? Put before them some special work in which the result of their labors can be seen; gather them into groups and associations; give them a name and a banner of their own.

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In these days most men admit the necessity of forming themselves into societies and companies in order to undertake and successfully carry forward any great and important enterprise. This is what is taking place on every side of us. Men organize companies to promote and launch any great branch of business; to grade a turnpike or build a railway; to dig a canal or erect an imposing structure. The impious combine to spread their pernicious doctrines, to hatch conspiracies, to stir up revolutions and to drive the people headlong into the bottomless pit. And will we be less zealous and devoted in saving souls than the wicked are in destroying them?

You go into a parish, let us say, where vice and unbelief have undisputed sway. You set up the banner of the Cross. This draws one and then another. Bring these together, set them to work, and they will gain souls. In a little while with zeal and charity you will get together a goodly number, particularly if you give special attention in this work of regeneration to the training of the children and youth of the parish.

You have zeal! Is it a generous zeal? Is it, like charity, universal?

We have succeeded to a generation which has left us as an inheritance only errors, scandals and ruins. Encompassed by these the Church's splendor is eclipsed, her authority ignored, her blessings reviled. Every manner of weapon is used against her—artifice when it serves the purpose, and when it does not, recourse is had to violence, so that she can say with

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the Psalmist: *The wicked have wrought upon my back.*[1]

In the presence of so sad a sight shall we fold our arms and weep? Shall we, the ministers of the King of kings, remain listless and unconcerned, stand idly by and see His empire invaded, devastated and laid waste? Shall we forget that the Church is to us more than home and country? That if she is not the supreme object of our love and affection, if her interests are not dearer to us than life, we are faithless to our duties as Catholics, and traitors to our calling as priests?

In the supernatural order of faith we are neither Italians nor Spaniards, Frenchmen nor Americans, we are Catholics.

Standing in the capital of any country, in Paris or Madrid, in Vienna or Washington, and looking out upon the prejudices, national and provincial, by which men are swayed, we see objects in a false and deceptive light; there is nothing that elevates, nothing that ennobles, nothing that fills the heart with a generous enthusiasm. But if we take our stand upon the top of the great Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, an immense horizon opens out before us; we embrace the past, the present and the future, heaven and earth, time and Eternity. This is the true and only point of view for a Catholic.

And withal there are priests who do not see anything beyond the belfry of their little church. All beyond that is as if it did not exist; their zeal dies within them

[1] Psal. cxxviii. 3.

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and is utterly extinguished the moment they step beyond the boundary-line of their own parish.

Talk to them of the general interests of the diocese, of the province, of the Universal Church; ask them to help in keeping up and promoting that most beautiful of Catholic charities, the work of the Propagation of the Faith, and your appeal is received with coldness, and sometimes spurned with derision. But how can a priest, who possibly looks with envy upon the success which rewards the zeal of his brother priest in a neighboring parish, be interested in the spread of the faith among the Indians and Chinese? And you boast of your zeal! If you have zeal, it is not a zeal for the glory of God, it is not a zeal inspired by charity. *Charity envieth not, is not ambitious, seeketh not its own.*[1] Charity sees only God, His glory and the salvation of souls; charity grieves to see the apostles of error multiplying day by day, while the apostles of truth are so few. Charity says with Moses: Would to God that everywhere men might rise up powerful in deed and word: *O that all the people might prophesy;* would to God that holier men than I and more fortunate might come and regenerate my parish, lessen my responsibility, share with me its burdens and help me to save the souls of whom on the day of the great assize I must give a strict account.

Alas! we say it weeping, there are priests whose morals are beyond reproach, even pious priests, and yet whose conduct gives you a cold chill, whose conversation exasperates and scandalizes you. Those are

[1] I. Cor. xiii. 5.

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they who are content with doing no more than say Mass, who give an explanation of the Gospel on Sunday, who hear the confessions of a few pious women; who occupy themselves with a thousand frivolous and useless things, but never take any heed of what goes on in their parish outside their church. Listen to them when they are in the company of laymen or their fellow priests. They talk of politics, of worldly affairs, and it may be of theatres and banquets. But who ever hears them say a word of the sufferings or the triumphs of the Church, or of the best means to extend the Kingdom of Christ and gain souls? These are subjects they never talk about. If it were not that they perform the sacred functions of their ministry, they would never be taken for priests. Speak to them of God and the salvation of souls and you annoy them and make them your enemies. They think they have enough of that sort of talk and to spare in the church, or, as they say: Keep that for the pulpit. But there is an ecclesiastical subject on which they are always ready to talk and on which they are well informed, namely, the revenue of their own parishes and that of others.[1] They know to the cent their own income and also that of their brother priests. This one, they say, has a good revenue; that one, a better still; this one lays by money, that one does not.

But some one will say: What is wrong in these conversations? And I will reply: Is there anything good or great or generous in them? Will the world be

[1] This is a remark which that pious layman Louis Veuillot used to make with sorrow.

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renewed and saved by priests who talk like this? *They were not of the seed of these men by whom salvation was brought to Israel.*[1] Such priests make one feel that there is a corpse in the house, and indeed, if there were not other priests, the presence of death would be only too evident.

Zeal must be living, active, ardent, a flame of fire: *The charity of Christ presseth me.*[2] But bear in mind it must be a flame that warms, illumines and revives, not one that burns, consumes and destroys.

Zeal should be tender, compassionate and so mild that it will go straight to the heart: *A mild answer breaketh wrath,*[3] triumphs over all obstacles, and subdues at the foot of the Cross the most hardened sinners: *He hath made lightnings for rain.*[4]

Zeal should also be noble and generous, because a priest ought to be ready, after the example of the Apostle, to sacrifice his most cherished possessions, and life itself for the glory of God and the salvation of his brethren: *I will most gladly spend, and myself be spent for your souls.*[5]

Finally, zeal should be in a sense boundless.

There are priests, I know, who are zealous, but their zeal is narrow and niggardly; it does not embrace the entire parish; it is confined to and is exhausted upon a few devout women. These constitute a sort of select and cherished flock; they claim and receive all the care and solicitude of the pastor; the other women of the parish, and especially the men, are neglected and

[1] I. Mach. v. 62. [2] II. Cor. v. 14. [3] Prov. xv. 1.
[4] Psal. cxxxiv. 7. [5] II. Cor. xii. 15.

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forgotten, while these are the very persons to whom a truly zealous pastor should give his best efforts.

There are other priests who fancy they have zeal, but what sort of zeal is that which is prompted and guided by vanity?

Is it zeal, for example, which leads a pastor to burden himself with duties for the proper discharge of which he has neither the strength nor the time? He has a large parish, and yet he wishes to do everything himself; he preaches, he hears confessions, he looks after the temporal affairs, he directs communities, everything must pass through his hands. To exercise a supervision over all parish work, to give to everything impulse and direction, is not only his right, but his duty. But the head is not to do the work of the hand. The assistant or assistants are going to seed physically and spiritually for want of something to do, and all the while the pastor is overwhelmed with a multitude of business, much of which is often left undone and little done well.

On the other hand, is that assistant inspired or led by true zeal who, instead of working harmoniously with his pastor and under his guidance, sets to work to create in the parish a little party of his own, to form a small flock, to gather about him a certain number of souls, and thus establish a parish within a parish, setting up altar against altar?

Is that confessor possessed of true zeal who refuses to allow his penitents, and especially his female penitents, to go to confession to another, particularly when they wish to ask advice in some matter of importance

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and special difficulty, or who wish, it may be, to unburden themselves of a load which is crushing out their very lives? How many priests are there who have been at the head of a parish for ten or twelve years, and in all that time have not called in an extraordinary confessor, and thus given those who have need of doing so an opportunity of making a good confession? And for this reason there are many who regularly frequent the sacraments and live on for years and years in a deplorable state, simply because they have not the courage to confess some grave sin to their pastor who knows them. If missions served no other purpose than that of giving the faithful an opportunity of making a good confession, after having made so many bad ones, the benefit of them would be more than words can say.

How often have we seen at our feet a man of an exteriorly irreproachable life whose conscience was a seething mass of sin. Father, he would say, may God be blessed for having sent you to extricate me from the frightful abyss into which I am fallen; I did not dare open my heart to my pastor or to any priest whom I knew; and had you not come I should have been lost.

Some one may say: Yes, it is easy enough to call in a preacher or confessor who will rouse these slumbering consciences, stretch out a hand to unfortunate sinners and start them once more on the way of salvation; but this stranger might so completely throw me into the shade that I should lose the good opinion that my parishioners now entertain of me.

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Oh, miserable vanity! And can sentiments and motives so degrading find entrance into the soul of a representative of Jesus Christ? Alas! we have only to weep over the depth of misery of which the human heart is capable. We humble ourselves and cover our faces for very shame.

We complain that faith is losing its hold on the minds of men, and that the labors of the clergy do little good. And yet the Catholic priesthood possesses the sublimest and most magnificent power that exists anywhere on this earth.

This is evident from its origin, its end and the means it employs. The origin of the priesthood was the fountain that was opened on Calvary, and there divided into two great streams, the one going back through the Patriarchs and Prophets to the first man and thence to the very bosom of God, and the other coming down through tradition and an uninterrupted succession of legitimate pastors to our own day. Its end is the perfection and happiness of the human race in time and eternity. It was instituted to develop whatever is sublime and noble and Godlike in man, to lift him, through meditation on the life of Jesus Christ, to divine heights, to God Himself, his last end, the completion of his being and his supreme good. The means it employs are truth, grace and charity.

A sublime power like this should make easy the conquest of the world; of this there can be no doubt. Why then is it that we are so far from achieving such a conquest? We ourselves are to blame; it is humiliating to say so, but it is true.

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What was the cause of the decline of the clergy in France during the last years of the eighteenth century, and what put into the hands of the enemies of God and society so terrific a power for evil? Was it not because those who should have been the uncompromising champions of truth fell to quarrelling among themselves and lost the spirit of zeal and sacrifice? Instead of getting together and closing up their ranks to present an undaunted and formidable front to the enemy, the soldiers of Jesus Christ fought at haphazard, some indeed bravely with arms in their hands, but without order and discipline and therefore to no purpose. They were divided among themselves by ambition, petty jealousies, miserable rivalries and unworthy passions. The strength that discipline gives was gone and the bonds of subordination were snapped. Here it was a Chapter that refused to recognize the jurisdiction of a Bishop, or a priest who refused to obey him; there a corporation that claimed special exemptions and privileges; and while the enemy was invading the citadel its defenders were engaged in fighting one another. While their very life was at stake they were disputing and intriguing about precedence and prelacies and promotions. Thus, when finally the clergy saw themselves victims of the fury of the storm that had broken upon them, despoiled, spurned, cast out, buffeted, trodden under foot, they could only say: *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*

Let us hope that so frightful a lesson may not be lost upon us. The policy of Satan and hell is this: Divide and destroy. If the spirit of division and dissension

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enters in among us we may as well surrender to the enemy, for our cause is already lost.

My God, if only priests clearly understood and fully appreciated the tremendous power which unity of doctrine, unity of hierarchy and, above all, their divine mission confer upon them; if only they had a living faith and an abiding trust in Him from whom they received their mission; if only they worked with the zeal, charity and disinterestedness of the first Apostles, the whole world would be subdued and kneel at their feet. They are more potent than statesmen with all their political craft and subterfuge; they are more potent than even kings and emperors with their armies; they are the depositories of a great moral force which alone can move the world.

Forward, then, O priests of the Lord; forward, with the sword of the Word and the shield of faith, all obedient to the same Head, all animated with the same spirit; diocesan priests and regulars, young men with the oil of consecration still fresh upon your hands, old men, veterans of the Sanctuary, forward, as one man; vice and error will flee at your approach, victory will be yours and the world will be saved.

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Section Third.

The Principal Offices of Pastoral Zeal.

1. Preaching.
2. The Ministry of the Sacrament of Penance.
3. The Government of Souls.

As every priest has at hand books treating of the above subjects, we shall only briefly touch some of their most important points, concerning which there is often much misconception.

CHAPTER I.

PREACHING.

1. The Duty of Giving Instruction.

THE duty of instructing the people who are committed to our care is one that directly concerns us and is of strict obligation. This is a duty imposed upon us, first, by natural law, for a shepherd must pasture his flock, and a father must provide food for his children. Next, it is imposed upon us by divine law: *Go teach*,[1] and the Apostles understood this command as addressed to them and executed it accordingly: *Going forth they preached everywhere*.[2] They left to certain deacons

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19. [2] Mark xvi. 20.

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the daily ministrations, *but we*, they said, *will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministration of the Word*.[1] Finally, it is imposed upon us by ecclesiastical law, as is clear from the words of the Council of Trent: "*The Holy Synod . . . hath decreed that all those who in any manner soever hold any parochial or other churches, which have the care of souls, shall at least on the Lord's days and solemn feasts, either personally or, if they be lawfully hindered, by others who are competent, feed the people committed to them, with wholesome words according to their own capacity and that of their people, by teaching them the things which it is necessary for them to know unto salvation, and by announcing to them, with briefness and plainness of discourse, the vices which they must avoid and the virtues which they must follow after, that they may escape everlasting punishment and obtain the glory of heaven.*[2]

These words of the Holy Synod not only remind pastors of their duty to instruct their people, they moreover point out what should be the subjects of their instructions and the way of treating them.

2. *The Subjects of Instructions to the People.*

God, the first beginning and last end of all things, and Jesus Christ, the sole mediator between God and man, are the two central subjects which should be the heart and the inspiration of all the teachings of a priest, for our Divine Master says: *This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*[3] This is the only useful

[1] Acts vi. 4. [2] Sess. 5, Chap. 2, De Reform. [3] John xvii. 3.

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knowledge, the sublimest philosophy, the highest wisdom.

Alas, the curse of this age is that the Saviour of the world is not known. There is no notion of a life higher than that of the senses and superior to reason; the principle of grace is simply ignored. The educated are rationalists and the ignorant do not think at all, while both are in their lives practically Pelagians, with the exception of a few who realize the necessity of supernatural aid for the practice of virtue, and earnestly and continuously seek it in prayer. This is the reason why souls have neither strength nor energy, why they faint and lie helpless by the wayside.

The sum of Christianity is this: Human nature fallen in Adam and rehabilitated in Jesus Christ.

Rationalism, which is an epitome of all errors, is nothing more nor less than a protest against the dogma of the fall of man and his rehabilitation by Jesus Christ. If in our instructions we succeed in firmly establishing these two palmary truths, in bringing them home to the people and in making them dominant throughout the world, we shall have utterly overthrown to the very foundation the master heresy of modern times and furnished the only efficient remedy against anarchy in the intellect and corruption in the will.

Hence the supernatural order of grace in this world and of glory in the next, forfeited by the prevarication of the head of the human family, and restored in a still higher sense by the mediation of the Word-made-flesh, is a subject which should be studied through and through by every preacher of the Gospel, a subject of

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perennial and exhaustless fertility, embracing within its scope the exposition of the Symbol of Faith, the doctrine of the Sacraments and the explanation of the Commandments of God and the Church.

3. The Way to Treat Instructions to the People.

The first form of instruction, and the most important, is the Catechism, provided the catechism is a good one, and the catechist knows how to use it. Catechism should consist in a simple and familiar, solid and clear instruction on the dogmas and morality of the Gospel. Such instruction is as a rule given to children, and it is of vital importance in this that it lays deep the foundation of faith and sows the seeds of virtue. Apostolic men in all ages have attached the greatest importance to this truly sublime office. St. Charles Borromeo, Bartholomew of the Martyrs, and Cardinal Bellarmine taught catechism constantly, and St. Francis de Sales prepared himself so carefully for the work that he wrote out the chief points of his explanation.

"I had the honor," says a historian of his life, "to be present on one occasion when he was teaching catechism. I have never seen a sight to equal it. This amiable and true father was seated on a small platform raised four or five steps in height and surrounded by children. It was a real pleasure to listen to him familiarly explaining the rudiments of our faith and to hear similitudes just to the point coming spontaneously from his lips. He kept his eyes on the little world of children about him and they fastened theirs on him. He became a child, made himself as one of them, to

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form in them the inner man, the perfect man in Jesus Christ."

Catechism is the milk of childhood. The explanation of the Gospels and sermons are the bread which is broken to the strong.

Sermons, in which the great truths of faith are set forth with all the wealth and majesty of Christian eloquence, may be very useful at times, as, for example, on the great festivities and public solemnities. They serve to bring strikingly before the people the beauty and depth of the Christian religion and to give a strong and vigorous impulse to their faith; but such sermons should be rare, after the manner of splendid banquets and dishes of exquisite flavor. The practice in our large cities of constantly preaching showy and pretentious sermons to simple Christians is an abuse, nay, I will go further, it is one of the pests of our age. They produce a sort of religious excitement and indigestion, but they give no nourishment.

An explanation of the Gospel, a homily, is the sort of instruction that gives strength and elasticity to the soul and sustains its vigor. The habitual form of instruction given by the pastor should be grave and stately, and yet so simple that he may without effort touch in his discourse the most minute and ordinary questions of every-day life. His manner of address should be that of a dignified conversation, like a father speaking straight to the hearts of his children and pointing out to them the way that leads to happiness.

A form of speech so simple and familiar might not always be well received if it should come from one who

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is not the pastor of the flock he is addressing. We have a right to expect from one, and especially a stranger, who speaks only rarely and on extraordinary occasions, a more elaborate and finished discourse. But every priest who has received the noble mission of preaching the word of God should be on his guard against three defects of which we shall now say a few words.

First Defect.

The first defect is to say good things, but to say them wretchedly: *bona sed non bene.* Here is a priest, for instance, who has studied well his theology; he has sufficient information; what he says is good, correct and exact, but he has neither order nor method. There is no luminous plan, no connection between one part and another, no sequence of thought and hence no unity in the discourse. After having listened to him his hearers have no idea what he wanted to prove, what truth he wanted to bring home, and possibly he does not know himself.

Here is another who is a fine reasoner, who has a logical mind and has order and method in all he says, but his composition is utterly devoid of energy, warmth and color; it is a carcass, a lifeless skeleton with all the flesh stripped off. How can you hope to do any good by preaching if you do not take captive the minds of your listeners? If you don't speak directly to them and arrest their attention by what you say? You speak of sin and judgment, of hell and heaven, and you are yourself unmoved, calm and undisturbed: *Si*

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vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi. You speak of the mercies of the Lord and the marvels of His love; you point to the crib, the Altar and the Cross, but your heart is cold, your words are formal and lifeless, not a pathetic accent escapes your lips. But of all sermons, whether delivered in town or country, to peasants or men of letters, the very worst is one that is long and heavy and tiresome.

Second Defect.

The second defect is that of those who talk well, in fact too well, but who say nothing worth listening to, *bene sed non bona.* It is the defect of those who seem more intent on being admired and gaining a name than on instructing and converting their hearers. How sad it is to see the pulpit of God frequently given over to empty declaimers whose every attitude, manner and gesture is studied; who strive to conceal under pompous and showy language their poverty of thought; who make an ostentatious display by employing all the figures and devices of rhetoric; who clothe with the flowers of art their barren and silly conceits; who, to catch the attention of their hearers, paint manners and customs that never existed and draw pictures the like of which was never seen in nature; and who affect to talk like wits instead of speaking as apostles and men of God. Listen to that preacher with his bombastic periods, his resounding and polysyllabic vocabulary. His noisy words come down from the pulpit like a roaring avalanche upon his amazed and startled hearers. They listen with their mouths wide open, and they

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admire because they do not understand. But all this empty noise, all those currents and waves of harmonious sound, even if they should elicit a momentary admiration, are the next moment lost, dissipated in air, forgotten and leave the people as ignorant and as much the slaves of their passions as they were before.

After all what is the good of those figures, those polished periods, those graces and charms of style? One who is sick, says Seneca, does not want a physician who can talk well, but one who can heal him: *Non querit medicum eloquentem; sed sanantem. Quid oblectas? aliquid agitur; urendus, secandus sum; ad hæc adhibitus es.*[1] The lifegiving sap of the word is exhausted by a luxuriant growth of leaves: *Quod luxuriat in flore*, says St. Ambrose, *hebetatur in fructu.*

Studied phraseology, an ambitious and pretentious style should be carefully banished from every grave and serious discourse, and should never be admitted into the Christian pulpit. We are engaged in a task quite different from that of marshalling words, polishing phrases and rounding periods. What is wanted in these days to arouse the sleeping consciences of sinners, is not fine language and the graces of style, but lightnings, thunderbolts and flames of fire.

Third Defect.

While avoiding the second defect be on your guard against falling into a third, the worst of all, namely, the defect of saying worthless things, and saying them wretchedly: *nec bona nec bene.*

[1] Epist. 75.

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This is frequently what happens in the case of those speakers who boast of being able to preach on the spur of the moment, and who go up into the pulpit without any preparation whatever, either proximate or remote. These men overwhelm their audiences with a deluge of words which have neither sense nor application to the matter in hand; they throw out statements at random and utter propositions that are inexact if not erroneous; they weary their hearers by their endless prolixity. Once they get into the pulpit they seem determined to stay there; they cast themselves upon the bosom of the stream of their own eloquence, and are borne along by its current; in their journey onward they describe the woods and the meadows, the cities and the mountains, without knowing when or where to cast anchor or come ashore. They so overload and confuse the memory of their hearers that these are incapable of retaining anything of what has been said. It is like putting out a lighted lamp by flooding it with oil.

What profit can the faithful get from discourses like these, which are devoid of doctrine, which teach no lesson from Christian history, which do not show the relations and the connection between the mysteries of faith; which do not point out the motives and the sanctions on which moral duties are based? Of what benefit to souls can be the discourses of preachers who do not prepare themselves for their work by study and prayer? They rarely read a pious book and are utter strangers to the writings of the Fathers. They have not time for such serious study. Cut off from the world by

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their calling they are constantly drawn into it by personal interest, by schemes, by intrigues and by inclination. Breathing its pestilential atmosphere and living in its swirl and tumult, how can they speak a language which is learned only in the silence of prayer and in intimate communion with God?

How many preachers will say to Jesus Christ on the day of General Judgment: Lord, have we not preached in Thy name? and the answer will be: *I know you not. You have sowed much and brought in little, and he that hath earned wages put them into a bag with holes.*[1]

What gifts, then, should a good preacher have?

The ancients defined an orator: *vir bonus dicendi peritus*. We will accept this definition. A good preacher, then, will be a priest of blameless life, pious, well informed, who says good things and says them well, *et bona et bene*. Observe the priest who is a man of prayer and study. Meditation on the eternal truths and on the life and mysteries of our Lord is habitual with him. Nurtured by the reading of holy books and making their substance his own, he is not obliged to go out of himself in search of thoughts; they well up unbidden from his own heart, which, being filled to overflowing, seeks only an outlet and a means of expression. As he does not put his trust *in the persuasive words of human wisdom*,[2] so neither does he tempt God and compromise His holy word by speaking offhand; he makes such preparation as circumstances will permit, but, what is still better, he prays fervently and earnestly that while he is speaking self may be lost sight of

[1] Aggeus i. 6. [2] I. Cor. ii. 4.

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and that Jesus Christ may speak by the mouth of His minister.

See him in the midst of his people: he seems bent under the weight of the truth which he is about to announce to them. He speaks, and his language is a stream of eloquence, living, impetuous, winning, which spreads everywhere and is welcomed by all. His words come from the heart and go straight to the hearts of his hearers. He takes possession of their minds, he dominates and subdues them, he fills them with fear, he buoys them up with hope, he strengthens them with the breath of his mouth, he identifies himself with them, he holds them in his power by the steady light of his eye. Those souls are now his captives, they have entered into his soul, they follow its every movement, they are borne up or cast down, joyful or sad, accordingly as he speaks to them words of hope or fear.

As the man of God goes on, his words gaining in energy and intensity, his hearers are breathless and their eyes suffused with tears; they have forgotten the preacher; they think only of time and eternity, of death, which is approaching, and of an endless future, which is opening to receive them; they seem to hear the shrill sound of the Angel's trumpet summoning men to judgment, and to see in vision the awful spectacle of the last judgment itself; the confusion and despair of the wicked, the joy and triumph of the just, the world and all it contains passing away and themselves alone in the presence of God and eternity.

This was the secret of the eloquence of the Saints and men of apostolic lives. Every one was subdued

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and borne along by the impetuous breath of the Spirit of God who spoke by their mouth. The churches in which they preached became so many *cenacles*, and the faithful who had gathered to listen to them went forth inflamed and, as it were, inebriated with the Spirit whom they had received. The preaching of St. Basil, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, was as the force of a thunderbolt, because his life was as luminous as light: *Sermo Basilii erat tonitru, quia vita ejus erat fulgur.*

My God, what a treasure for a parish, for a whole diocese, is a preacher who is a truly holy man! Of what enormous good is he not capable? Just think: twelve such men were enough to convert the world.

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CHAPTER II.

THE MINISTRY OF CONFESSION.

MOST Christians in the world think confession the heaviest and the most galling yoke imposed by Jesus Christ upon His disciples, and it must be confessed that pastors and preachers have contributed not a little to encourage so deplorable and mischievous a prejudice. Instead of representing confession to the faithful as one of the most gracious and beneficent dispensations of God's mercy to man, as a heavenly remedy for healing the wounds of the soul, a remedy wholly adequate and answering to the secret instincts and innate cravings of our nature; instead, I say, of winning sinners with considerations so tender and motives so assuring, they, on the contrary, endeavor to drive them to the tribunal of penance with, if I may so say, the scourge in their hand and with words of menace upon their tongue.

Be this as it may, it must be admitted that, even if confession is at first sight disagreeable and distasteful to the natural man, there is no dispensation of grace more salutary or more necessary to our fallen nature. An English Protestant, some years back, in writing on this subject used these words: "It is impossible to establish justice, morality and virtue on a solid basis

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without the tribunal of penance, because this tribunal, of all tribunals the most formidable, dominates the consciences of men and guides them more securely and more efficaciously than any other."

The strength of the Christian life, the salvation of souls, the prosperity of religion are all found in the sacrament of penance when worthily administered. The conversion and sanctification of souls are begun at the foot of the pulpit by the words of the preacher, but they are completed and perfected in the tribunal of penance: *Dentur idonei confessarii*, says St. Pius V., *ecce omnium christianorum plena reformatio.*

What are the qualifications of a good Confessor? What are his duties towards the various persons who come to seek his ministry?

1. Qualifications of a Good Confessor.

The qualifications of a good confessor should correspond to the various offices which he discharges in the tribunal of reconciliation. There he is a father, a judge, a mediator, a physician, a teacher, a guide of souls.

The reader is referred for a full treatment of this subject to authors who professedly deal with it. I shall make only one remark.

In the sacred tribunal a priest is a mediator between an offended God and the sinner who comes to accuse himself of his guilt. Such a priest, then, should be holy and pleasing to God, for how can he plead for others when he himself is under a curse?

A sinner presents himself to you; he is most un-

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happy, because by long indulgence sin has grown to be a sort of necessity to him. He is a slave to it, but he wishes to break its bonds and be free. You point out to him the means ordinarily prescribed in similar cases. He promises to make use of them, and as a matter of fact is more or less successful in overcoming himself and for a few days gets on very well. But in a little while his passions get the better of him and he is a worse case than before, and, in consequence, is discouraged and almost driven to despair. Distressed both by a horror of his sins and by the dejection to which the uselessness of his efforts has reduced him, the unfortunate man comes back to you, casts himself at your feet, and, shedding bitter tears, begs you to help him in the work of his conversion. Father, he says, sobbing, please put yourself between God and me and obtain my reconciliation; you, who are privileged to enjoy an intimate familiarity with the Father of Mercies; you, who are ever at the very source of grace; you, he was going on to say, who are a Saint, another Jesus Christ, and as such must be all-powerful with God. Tepid and unworthy priest, what answer will you give? You will reason with him and make some formal discourse. Alas! this poor soul has no need of discourses. What he needs is a mediator and saviour. If in such circumstances you do not feel your very heart moved with compassion; if you have not a confident hope of bringing this new Lazarus back to life again; if you cannot say with humble trustfulness: *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God*,[1] O

[1] John xi. 4.

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God, why then do you ask sinners to come to you, since you are not sufficiently powerful to obtain their pardon and reconcile them with the Lord, whom they have offended? If you have not that holiness of life which would give you easy and sure access to the throne of the Omnipotent God, how can you be a representative of Jesus Christ? Do you then discharge your office of mediator?

Why, then, do you pretend to heal in others the diseases with which you yourself are afflicted? Can we not say to you also: *Physician, heal thyself?*[1]

It is true, your spiritual infirmities do not deprive you of the supernatural power which you received in ordination, but would it not be truly deplorable if, while loosing others from the bondage of Satan, you should still continue to groan in slavery? if, while restoring life and grace to the guilty, you should still lie dead and buried in the grave of some sinful habit?

Picture to yourself some unfortunate priest seated in the tribunal of penance and covered with the leprosy of sin. At his feet is a poor penitent weeping, who has laid bare the wounds of his soul and with tears in his voice asks the priest to apply the grace of healing. The priest unseals the saving fount and drops of life-giving blood flow out upon the sick soul. Son, says the priest, your sins are forgiven, you are healed. And I, he says to himself, and I still bear my deadly wounds about me.—I restore to you life and health and the merits which you had forfeited. And I, and I, he goes on, am still under a mortal malady, still

[1] Luke iv. 23.

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fainting and needy and miserable.—Go in peace, my son, he says, you are now a child of God, a brother and co-heir with Jesus Christ. And I, and I, he continues, am fuel destined for the burning.—If you, he says, persevere to the end in the state in which you now are, you will sing forever and ever the mercies of the Lord in the company of the Saints. And I, he adds, if I persevere in my present state I shall be thrust out among the demons. My lips, which but now have blessed you, my lips which morning by morning are purpled with the blood of a God, will forever and ever utter curses and blasphemies.

Is not this a terrible thought. Who can search its meaning for a moment and not be stricken with fear and horror?

St. Gregory the Great sharply reproves those who, destitute of holiness of life, rashly and presumptuously take upon themselves the formidable ministry of the confessional. Such a minister, he says, is like one covered with wounds, who yet presumes to cure those less sorely afflicted than himself: *Qua præsumptione percussum mederi properat qui vulnus in fronte portat?* Rash physician! His constitution is weak and debilitated and yet he does not hesitate to treat contagious diseases and drink in pestilence and death; his hands are impure and yet he dares to touch festering sores and fetid wounds. His heart is not chaste, his will is inconstant, and yet he fears not to make himself the depository of the frailties of the weaker sex.

Ah, if this were a mortified man, a man of prayer, he could cleanse away that filth without being soiled

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by it, he would be like the light of the sun which rests upon things foul and unclean yet loses none of its brightness and splendor. Alas, let us say it weeping, for how many priests has the tribunal of penance been a rock on which they were wrecked!

2. What are the Duties of a Confessor towards the Various Persons who Come to Seek His Ministry?

All manuals of theology treat fully of the manner of hearing the confessions of children, of adults and of the sick, but very little is said of how a confessor should deal with his fellow priests. A subject so important calls for special treatment. How true is it that when you, a priest, hear the confessions of other priests, you discharge a holy, an august, a formidable ministry! God puts into your hands His dearest interests, His own glory, the honor of His Church, the salvation of souls. Bear in mind that when you see at your feet a pastor or other priest charged with the salvation of souls, you are not pronouncing judgment upon the life of one single man, but upon the weal or woe of an entire parish, upon the eternal salvation of many generations. Beg God, then, to give you light and strength and charity.

Who is this priest who comes now to seek your ministry? Possibly he is the unhappy slave of some sinful habit. You know the principles of Theology, the rules which you prescribe in the case of the simple faithful. Apply them now. There is not one rule for laymen and another for priests.

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My dear brother, you will say, you have been committing this grave sin for a long time; your relapses have been constant and frequent; you have not taken the necessary precautions; you have not fled the danger; you have not separated yourself from the occasion; I see in you no extraordinary sign of contrition; I cannot give you absolution.

But now I am humbled by my fall and I promise amendment for the future.—I have often trusted you when you gave the same promise; I gave you absolution over and over again, always hoping that you would be more watchful, that you would pray more fervently and that you would make generous efforts to do better; but I always find the same levity, the same dissipation, the same imprudence. Hence I can no longer trust to promises, I must have the evidence of some convincing fact.

But what am I to do? To-morrow is Sunday, and I must say Mass and administer the sacraments.—And if I should give you a sacrilegious absolution, would you be better disposed than you are now to go up to the Altar? I should then be a sharer in your guilt without diminishing it in your regard, and in your reprobation without making it less terrible for you.

What shall I do, then?—Your condition is indeed very sad and very deplorable. Would that I could extricate you from it even by the shedding of my own blood. Go, throw yourself at the foot of the crucifix, shut yourself up in your room and there meditate seriously on the many outrages which you have committed against the divine majesty; excite in yourself a

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living, a heartfelt, a perfect contrition, and then do what your conscience directs.

Yes, I am ready to do whatever is necessary; never have I felt as I do at this moment the frightful condition I am in; I want to escape from it, cost what it may. I have long tried the patience of God, but now I have decided and I am determined; now that I have entered into myself I will set everything to rights. I will sever all relations with persons who have been the partners of my sin; I will burn that book which has poisoned my soul; I will take up a new rule and enter upon a new manner of life; each day I will set apart a certain fixed time for meditation, for study, for examination of conscience, and for spiritual reading.—Are these really your resolutions?—Yes; no matter what it costs or what sacrifice I shall have to make, I wish to be a man of God, I wish to live a priestly life.—Very well, then, let us kneel down together, my dear brother, and give thanks to the God of mercies, who is now ready to pardon you; the absolution which I did not dare give you before I can now give you with full confidence. As soon as you have a little time to spare come back to me and we shall agree upon the best means of insuring your perseverance.—You are indeed a worthy confessor, and truly a man of God; you have made a most splendid conquest; you are a charitable physician, for you have saved the soul of your brother.

Who is this priest who comes now to seek your good offices? He is a man of good morals, his conduct is irreproachable, he has no vulgar vices, but he leads a

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dissipated, a routine life, and is destitute of piety and the spirit of prayer.

Alas! in all this the confessor is just like him, and hence he does not dare say a word to his penitent; he gives him absolution, and seems not to have the least suspicion but that he has done his full duty.

You are indeed a very accommodating confessor; you know full well that this penitent of yours rarely if ever makes a meditation and rarely examines his conscience; that in saying Mass he is the reverse of edifying; that he recites his Breviary, and administers the sacraments, with haste and unbecoming levity; you know that his information and theological knowledge are quite superficial; that he does not study and yet solves the most difficult cases of conscience at a venture; you know that he is often absent from his parish without any sufficient reason; that he makes little or no preparation for his catechism class or his sermons; that his church is ill kept and destitute of the most necessary things, while his residence is fitted up with taste, elegance and luxury; that his library is bare and his cellar is well stocked; you know that he is worldly-minded and a frequent visitor at clubs and parties where his virtue is exposed to great danger; you know that he has a loose and bitter tongue, that he has little respect for his superiors and as little charity for his fellow priests, of whom he speaks slightingly and caustically in the presence of laymen; you know all this and yet you never warn him, never insist upon his reforming his life, and correcting habits and practices so contrary to the spirit of his vocation and so culpable

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in a priest.—What would you have me say? He knows his duties, and there is no need of me lecturing him.—Yes, but bear in mind you are his confessor and you cannot with a safe conscience suffer him thus to delude himself. Speak to him as you would to one of your own parishioners under like circumstances. Here, for instance, is a good layman not given to any vice and yet not solidly virtuous, who constantly commits venial sins knowingly and willingly. He comes to you to confession and you allow him to go to Holy Communion at Easter and at intervals during the year, and you exhort him to be more generous in the service of God. But suppose, while going on in this careless, tepid way of life, he should ask your leave to go to Holy Communion daily; would you grant it? No, assuredly you would not. Have you then two weights and two measures, or do you think that a greater height of sanctity is required for Holy Communion than for the celebration of Mass? Or do you think that a priest who morning by morning offers in sacrifice the Spotless Lamb is not bound to as great a perfection as is a layman who receives the same Lamb only at intervals?[1]

[1] I am well aware that a distinction should be made between a priest and a simple layman. A layman, inasmuch as he goes to Holy Communion only for his own spiritual good, does not go often, unless he knows he is properly disposed to derive profit from it. The priest, on the contrary, offers the Holy Mass not for himself alone but for the Universal Church. To celebrate Mass is one of the chief duties of the priesthood: *Every high-priest is ordained that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.* He may go up to the Altar provided his conscience does not chide him with any grave sin. But if he does not bear within him at the Altar a true spirit of faith and piety, what is the consequence? He enriches others while he continues in a deplorable condition himself.

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O brother priests, let us avow it to our shame, we have little charity for our fellow priests; their spiritual good gives us little concern. If a man of the world places himself under our direction, we at once take him to our heart, we help him to free himself from his evil habits, his lassitude and his spiritual sloth. But if a priest comes to us, we seem careless and indifferent about his sanctification and improvement. We have not a word to say to him; we permit him to live on in a lax, easy and dangerous life; with him we are heartless.

What! Is his soul less precious in our eyes than that of the humblest Christian? Will less glory come to God from his being perfect than from the perfection of some female devotee?

Ah, if that priest, who when he came forth from the Seminary was full of highest promise, had had the good fortune to fall in with manly, enlightened and zealous directors, he might be to-day an angel of virtue and an apostle in his parish. But thanks to listless, lazy confessors, devoid of the spirit of God, his fervor has gone on decreasing from day to day, his heart has grown cold and callous, and now he is on the downward slope that leads to destruction.

But the one who comes to me is a most highly respected priest, a respect of which he is worthy because of his age, his long experience and the service he has rendered the Church; and would you have me

Since, then, I must celebrate Mass every day, therefore I must be holy, and I will celebrate every day that I may go on growing in holiness. This is how a wise priest reasons.

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stand up before such a man and play the master and teacher?—No, by no means. I would not have you forget the modesty which becomes you or the proprieties due him. Even when the priest who confesses to you is your equal you should always treat him with the deference, consideration and respect due his character, but neither should you lose sight of the ministry with which you are burdened. In the discharge of an office which is nothing if not divine, you should not become a craven coward and a miserable slave to human respect.

When episcopal residence was less strictly observed than it is at present, a Bishop who was on his way to Paris called on an assistant priest of a parish, and asked him to hear his confession. The priest begged to be excused, saying: My Lord, I am a young man and there is in this city a number of venerable and respected priests. But the Bishop insisted. Very well, then, said the priest, if Your Excellency will have it so, I shall obey. But before beginning permit me to ask you if you have any legitimate reason for dispensing yourself from the obligation of residence in your diocese? We shall not speak of that, replied the Bishop; it is my affair, and you need not concern yourself about it. My Lord, said the priest, I can go no further. Very well, then, replied the Bishop, I shall tell you my reason for being absent and then you can judge. He made his confession, went back at once to his diocese, sent for the young priest and made him his vicar-general.

O ye confessors of priests, clothe yourselves with

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the mantle of charity, and receive with outstretched arms and open hearts all your brother priests who come to you seeking pardon for their faults, light in their perplexity, comfort in their trials. Leave everything to assist them, for assuredly it is but just that they who give their lives for the salvation of others should enjoy from time to time the privilege of coming to true friends, who will aid them in the great affair of their salvation and take a real interest in promoting their perfection.

But I warn you once more against being faithless to your duty either by a too gracious condescension or by culpable weakness. Bear in mind that while you are in the sacred tribunal you are not your own masters but men, and officials of God. Guard the rights and the honor of the priesthood. Be firm, and if necessary say to that priest: *Non licet.* My brother, say to him, you cannot continue to keep that person in your house; you must break off those dangerous associations; you must be careful not to encourage that growing passion or allow that abuse to go on: *non licet, non licet.*

Is this rigorism, is this harshness? No, it is zeal in its best sense. It is real charity. A truly good priest cannot bear to see his brother wounded without feeling the same compassion for him that he would feel for himself, and hence his anxiety, his solicitude to apply the grace of healing. He watches with a practised eye the symptoms of the disease in order that he may learn its causes and stay its progress. He studies what remedies will be the most efficacious; he resolutely applies them; and then he tells his penitent what pre-

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cautions are to be taken, and what manner of life he is to lead.

But a confessor who well understands his duty will not conclude that he has fully discharged it when he has repaired the ravages of sin; he knows that still another office of zeal and charity awaits him; he will examine the disposition of his penitent, measure his strength, study his inclinations, instruct him how to go forward prudently and yet courageously in the way of perfection.

And is not this obligation of helping souls to push onward in well-doing rigorously binding on you in the case of a brother priest who seeks your advice and places himself under your guidance?

But this is a good priest, you say; his life is regular and edifying, there is nothing of a grave character in his confessions, and hence I give him absolution. What would you have me do more?

Is he a good priest? Well, granted that he is. Are *you* a good confessor? That priest is well disposed and has in him the promise of high and holy virtues; if wisely directed and encouraged he will grow to be an apostle; but if a friendly voice does not warn him against his infidelity to grace, if he is not cheered in moments of discouragement, strengthened in his trials and temptations, put on his guard against the deceptions of self-love, he will be drawn by his evil inclinations into habits of laxity; to his first fervor will succeed a life of ease and dissipation, and he will become a very ordinary priest—a light that has gone out, salt that has lost its savor.

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Will you conclude from all this that every time a priest comes to confession to you, you are to give him a lengthy instruction and a fervid exhortation? No, certainly not: the confessional is neither a pulpit nor a tribune; it is not a place to sermonize, and least of all to lecture your brother priests. Frequently only a single word is necessary, and sometimes not even that. But you ought to study and second the workings of grace in the soul of your penitent; you ought to warn him if he has been wanting in loyalty or correspondence to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; you should be firm if you detect any hesitancy on his part, or shrinking or cowardice in the presence of some necessary sacrifice; in fine, you should study the capabilities and strength of your penitent and the designs of God upon him, and encourage him to go on from virtue to virtue, and from height to height in sanctity. This is what the Fathers of the early Church meant when they called the art of directing souls the most exalted of all arts: *Ars artium regimen animarum.*[1]

If confessors of priests could only apprehend and appreciate the greatness of the ministry which they exercise and faithfully discharge it, what glory they would give to God, what eminent service they would render to their brother priests and to the Church! Labor, then, for the sanctification of priests, stir up within you the fire that should set the whole world aflame.

[1] St. Gregory.

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CHAPTER III.

CARE OF SOULS.

WHILE the task of governing men is the most difficult of all tasks, because of difference of disposition, variety of character and conflict of interests, it is rendered much more so for the priest on account of the evil passions against which he must wage a continual war. To triumph over such obstacles and govern a parish to the satisfaction of all requires, not only exceptional natural ability, but preeminently assistance from on high. Into the ear of the priest are poured the sins and the sorrows, the regrets, the miseries and the appeals of humanity, for he is alike the confidant and the physician of all. His whole life is spent in binding up and healing the wounds of our poor fallen nature, and he must have both a sure and steady hand and a touch delicate, cautious and prudent.

There are here two questions to be considered:

1st. As an administrator, which should be the more conspicuous in the actions of a priest, severity or kindness?

2d. As a physician, what medium is he to hold between a lax and a severe morality?

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First Question.

No doubt Jesus Christ requires His priests to be strong and energetic men. Firmness is necessary in a shepherd of souls if he is to withstand the contradictions of the impious, make headway against the assaults of vice and error, and preserve his virtue and self-respect in the midst of the scandals of which he will be constantly a witness.

On the other hand, our Saviour gives His priests this precept: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*[1] And He adds this warning: *I send you as lambs in the midst of wolves.*[2]

Here, then, are two characteristics, each equally necessary and yet difficult to harmonize, namely, strength and kindness. An administration in which kindness is not reinforced by strength is soon enfeebled and everything drifts into disorder for want of a firm, guiding hand. An administration in which strength is not tempered with kindness creates a spirit of revolt and destroys by excessive severity all respect for authority. There should be kindness, but a kindness that will not permit evil to go unpunished. There should be strength, but a strength that is not so stern and inflexible as to irritate and dishearten the offender.

Since, then, it is so difficult to preserve the equilibrium between strength and kindness, to which should the scales incline? Which is the more efficacious and salutary government in dealing with souls, that which

[1] Matt. xi. 29. [2] Luke x. 3.

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sins by overkindness or that which sins by over-severity?

The question is one to be answered not by theory but by fact. God, who is equally just and merciful, has employed in His dealings with men two forms of government, the one very different from the other. The law of the Old Testament was a law of rigor. God appeared in the midst of lightning and thunder; His voice was terrible and as the rumbling peals that shook the distant hills. He threatened to exterminate offending rebels and precipitate them into the yawning pit below. What was the result? The people of Israel trembled with fear and fled, but this did not prevent them from going back to their false gods; and the God of armies for a long series of centuries had only a small number of faithful worshippers.

But see what a change takes place under the New Law, the Law of Love. The God of Heaven conceals His majesty and takes on the likeness of man; He is full of kindness and gentleness; He gathers sinners about Him; He converses with them; He eats with them, and His gracious condescension wins all hearts. They come to Him from all sides; troops of people follow Him into the desert; and now, after nearly nineteen centuries, thousands gladly endure humiliations, sufferings and death for love of Him.

What, then, is to be the conclusion? Even God, when He governed with rigor, drove the people from Him; but when, as under the New Dispensation, He speaks to them kindly and governs with gentleness, all are subdued and fall at His feet. And does not this

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clearly demonstrate that the pastoral ministry should have all the characteristics of a mild and paternal government?

A master who rules slaves, does so lash in hand; and a king, in ruling his subjects, is armed with the sword. God Himself, when He wishes to break the pride of rebels, threatens and speaks in tones of thunder; this is the strength that dominates and compels, the power that conquers and subjugates. But is this the way to rule in the spiritual world, where intellects are to be subdued and hearts won? No, here everything is to be achieved by persuasion, gentleness and love.

When God no longer rules rebels but His faithful servants, He does so, as Solomon says, with great deliberation and a certain deference: *cum attentione et reverentia.* If God, who is the Sovereign Ruler of men, gives His commands with great deliberation and deference, will man, who is but a worm of the earth, dare to command with harshness and chide with severity?

We have each of us at our side an Angel, charged to guard us and guide our footsteps on our way through life. He is greatly saddened by our slackness and negligence in the service of God. Could he not reprove us sharply, upbraid us for our sloth, and use force to urge us forward? But no, he only gently warns us, suggests holy inspirations, draws us onward along the way of virtue with fetters of gold and the sweet persuasion of his love.

My brother, said the Archangel to Tobias, is it

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your good pleasure that we go this way, or that we do this? He might have hurried him on and forcibly urged him forward; he might have said: Come along and follow this road without turning to the right or the left; it is God's will and you must obey. This harsh mode of speech is not the language of Heaven nor that of the Angels of God.

Neither does the Church speak haughtily or deal harshly with her children. We have a pattern in St. Peter. He was the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and bore in his hands the keys of life and death, and yet instead of giving commands to the infant Church he shed his blood for her.

Another instance is St. Paul. He had been designated as the Teacher of the Nations and had been invested with extraordinary power, and yet how did he use it? He did not say: I command you in the name of God; or, I order you under pain of anathema; he used instead a less severe and more tender form of speech. I pray thee, Timothy, he said, by the love you bear me. And again: I conjure thee by the bowels of Jesus Christ; and again: I beseech you by the mildness and modesty of Jesus Christ; and again: If you love me, if I have done aught pleasing to you, in the name of the Lord do ye likewise, for what I ask of you is for the service and glory of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Both St. Peter and St. Paul, when they gave commands, softened their severity by pouring the oil of gladness into the hearts of those to whom they spoke; and St. John sweetened whatever he said with the

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balm of charity. My dear children, he would say, if you love Jesus Christ, do this. And again: I beseech you through Jesus Christ, our Master, love one another; if you do this it is sufficient; love will inspire what more you are to do; I have no other command to give you; more than this the Lord does not require, nor do I.

Such sentiments as these, instinct with sweetness and love, scattered through the Epistles of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John, have served as examples which have been followed by all holy Pontiffs, and by other pastors animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. They governed rather by beseeching as fathers than by commanding as rulers, following in this the beautiful maxim of St. Bernard: *Orando magis et obsecrando quam imperando.*

Yes, you will say, such a system is very well if it were effective, but can you govern without firmness?—True, that must not be lost sight of, and the Apostles themselves, to whom reference has just been made, did not forget it on occasions, nor did they hesitate to use it when it became necessary to do so.

It is said of Divine Wisdom: *She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly.*[1] This, then, is the best rule for the government of men. A ruler should be at once a father and a mother, tempering authority with love, and severity with mildness, concealing the thorn beneath the rose. This, all agree, is the perfection of government. But how can one follow so even a course? How can one hold the

[1] Wisd. viii. 1.

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scales so steady that they will not incline to one side or the other? By following the example of the Apostles, or of St. Francis de Sales, or of other holy priests who were themselves formed after the pattern given by the Son of God, while He sojourned here on earth and lived among men.

Learn of Me, says our Saviour, not to be strong and powerful but because, *I am meek and humble of heart.*[1] He was foretold in prophecy as a King whose characteristic was mildness: *Behold thy King cometh meek.* And again it was foretold of Him: *The bruised reed He shall not break and the smoking flax He shall not quench.*[2] The myrrh of sweetness distilled from His lips; He ravished the multitude, and led sinners captive by His gracious kindness. He is our model and our pattern.

Our Lord permitted the head of His Church to fall, says St. Leo: *Ut in ecclesiæ principe pœnitentiæ remedium conderetur.* St. Peter's character was, as St. Augustine says, somewhat stern and severe: *Paulo durior et severus.* His fall taught him, and was intended to teach him, that he who bears the keys of the kingdom of heaven should learn to be indulgent and merciful to sinners. Hence having once entered upon the office of governing the flock of Christ he was all love and kindness, and his tears were more potent and frequent than his words of command.

If you see any one among you commit a fault, says St. Paul, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in

[1] Matt. xxi. 5. [2] Isai. xlii. 3.

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the spirit of meekness, considering that you yourselves may to-morrow commit a graver fault.[1]

In one of the old Councils the Church is called a dove, and not an eagle or a crow, for these bite and tear. There is no rancor in a dove; it fondles and caresses him who does it harm. It is a puzzle to me, says the amiable St. Francis, how God has fashioned my heart; for if one should pluck out one of my eyes, I could not help looking lovingly upon him with the other which he has left me.

All founders of religious orders were angels of meekness. St. Macarius was called the tutelar deity of the Monks, because, while ruling thousands of them, he was never known to give way to impatience or asperity of temper. St. Bernard begged pardon of God and his brethren because, during the first years that he was abbot of Clairvaux, he displayed so fiery a zeal and was so severe on himself and others that he was near bringing disaster upon his community. The holy abbot Poppo was one day reproved for his excessive mildness, which, he was told, would bring on deplorable laxity in his monastery. O my brothers, he replied, how happy I shall be if I am condemned for having been too kind and charitable. I will say to Jesus Christ: Lord, why, then, didst Thou give me this precept: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart?*[2]

Still we must be on our guard against mistaking weakness and laxity for kindness. St. Ignatius, who was a great master in the art of governing, said that

[1] Galat. vi. 1. [2] Matt. xi. 29.

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there are two characteristics in a good government, namely, it should be kind but efficacious, efficacious but kind, because, if a government is to be beneficial, these two cannot be parted, they must go together.

By kindness, then, is not meant weakness, which would only encourage the audacious and allow the guilty to go unpunished, but rather that patience and forbearance which put up with defects and win back the erring by gentleness and charity.

St. Augustine, in drawing out a comparison between one who rules with kindness and one who rules with severity, says that the former is a father to his brethren, and the latter their tempter: *Durum prælatum tentatorem subditorum puto.*

We are not to seek in ourselves that angelic gentleness which makes virtue lovable; it is to be sought in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, its true and only source. The priest who frequently converses with Jesus in prayer will little by little grow into the likeness of the model before his eyes; his heart, which before had been hard and dry and cold, will grow tender, affectionate and sympathetic.

It is to be observed, however, that in the most virtuous priests there are gradations, more or less noticeable, alike of kindness and severity, but this is owing to peculiarities of character in each. Grace corrects the natural disposition, forms it anew, but does not destroy it. St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis de Sales were both great Saints; they were nearly contemporary and breathed the same air; both were filled with the spirit of our Lord and each carried to

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an heroic degree the virtue of charity towards his neighbor. But the method of governing a diocese and directing souls followed by each was entirely different.

St. Charles, who it is true, when the occasion demanded it, could temper severity with kindness, has come down to us as a model of sacerdotal vigor. The name of the gentle St. Francis, who, as he said, preferred a drop of oil to a cask of vinegar, is a synonym for meekness and benignity.

A parish priest must at times, when the wicked are to be rebuked, show himself stern and severe, but in doing so he takes on a character which is foreign to his calling and only assumed for the occasion. His habitual and normal character should be tenderness; and, after the manner of a wise father, he should be mild and compassionate. Even if a priest should possess heroic virtue and lack the meekness of our Saviour, he will never be proposed by the Church as a pattern for her ministers. And now let us make a comparison and draw a parallel.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century there were two priests in Paris who were very dear friends. One was St. Vincent de Paul and the other Father Bourdoise, both eminent for virtue, both zealous for the glory of God, and both equally severe with themselves. But in directing souls and governing men their methods were entirely different. Father Bourdoise, who was stern and almost inflexible, was in the habit of reproaching his friend for his excessive kindness, and on one occasion he jokingly called him a *dish-clout*. The Church, however, has decided in favor of

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St. Vincent de Paul, whom she has set up on her Altars for the reverence of the faithful, and it is not likely she will ever raise the stern Father Bourdoise to a similar dignity.

Kindness in ecclesiastical government is the spirit of the Gospel. That is established. But is the same spirit of gentleness to be the norm or rule in the interpretation of the moral law, whether in the pulpit or in the confessional? A word on lax and severe morality will be our answer.

Second Question.

What medium is to be observed by a priest between a severe and a lax morality? There have been priests in every age who have decided this question according to their own fancy and inclination, and priests will continue to do so in the future. There will always be doctors and preachers and directors of souls who, yielding to the prejudices and tastes of the age, or desirous of gaining the good will of individuals, or ambitious to make a name, will change the teachings of the Church, making easy or burdensome the yoke of the Lord; as if it were their right to broaden or make narrow the way to heaven; as if it were their privilege to substitute the changing and fallible opinions of men for the infallible and changeless law of the Gospel of Christ.

In the eighteenth century there was much said and written about severity and laxity in morals. This discussion was the prelude to the war waged by the Jansenists against the Church. Seeing themselves

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beaten in the controversy on dogma they changed their ground and assailed the Church's teaching on morals, hoping thus to embarrass their opponents. The stratagem was for a time successful, but the weapons they employed are now worthless and cast aside.

Still there are priests both in France and elsewhere who, while indignantly disavowing the heretical doctrines of the Jansenists, defend and preach the principles of morality which made the name of Port Royal notorious. Not indeed that they reduce these principles to practice in their own conduct; quite the reverse; for, while professing to be enamoured of strictness of life and an austere morality, they pass their days in ease and comfort and stigmatize as patrons of laxity men who have given up the world and live hard, self-denying lives.

But this aside, a good priest is certainly not a man who follows the mode of the world and its fashions; he is a man who is loyal to truth and loves order. The truth, then, is this, that laxity and severity are two extremes, both equally bad and dangerous and both skirting along the edge of the precipice.

And first *laxity*. It is condemned in every page of Holy Writ. Did not our Lord say: *Narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leads to life?*[1] And again: *I came not to send peace upon earth, but the sword?*[2] And does not He command what is hard and a trial to flesh and blood? To cleanse the heart of whatever is a snare to it and defiles it, to submit to humiliations, to deny oneself in all things, to return

[1] Matt. vii. 14. [2] Matt. x. 34.

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good for evil, to carry the Cross daily—this, in short, is the morality taught by Jesus Christ. This is but saying that the life of a Christian is a life of mortification and self-denial, and that to be a Christian in any true sense one must be generous and courageous, ready to struggle and willing to make war upon oneself and conquer. For this reason the Holy Council of Trent warns ministers of the Sanctuary against that excessive indulgence which causes sinners to slumber on in their sins and against becoming accomplices in disorders which they should combat and correct.

To wish to adjust the teachings of the Gospel to the solicitations of human passion, instead of subjecting human passion to the teaching of the Gospel; to set up principles from which deductions can be drawn indulgent to human nature, ever averse to mortification and self-sacrifice, is to open wide the door to laxity, to create false consciences and to cause the loss of souls under pretext of tranquillizing them. Woe to you who deceive the people, scatter lies and call them oracles; woe to you who lead them astray and allow them to slumber on in false security! My hand shall be heavy upon you; the corruption of your false maxims shall be visited upon your heads, and in the end you shall know that I am the Lord.[1]

Next, *severity*. Faith and a decent respect for oneself will be enough to restrain one from disseminating in public or teaching privately a lax morality which is clearly in opposition to the spirit of the Gospel. But this is not true in regard to severity. An excessive

[1] Ezechiel vi. 13.

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severity flatters vanity and gains a reputation for sanctity. A priest who openly parades himself as one of austere life is reputed mortified and a man of irreproachable morals. This was the artifice made use of by the Scribes and Pharisees to lead the people astray and poison their minds with error. A stately walk, an imperious tone of voice, a cold and mortified exterior, long prayers, ceaseless censure of the most innocent actions, a haughty scorn of publicans and sinners,—all this but served as a mask for their hypocrisy and was a fitting expression of the severe maxims which they disseminated. Their teachings were an additional burden, and made almost unbearable the already weighty and galling yoke of the Hebrew law. They laid upon others burdens which they themselves were unwilling to bear, and which they would not so much as touch with their finger's tip.

This is why the Lamb of God, who was so gentle and tender to others, who pardoned the woman taken in adultery, who had not even a harsh word for Judas who betrayed Him, nor for the executioners who crucified Him, had for the Scribes and Pharisees only words of scorn and anathema: *Woe to you!*

And why was our Lord so severe upon them? Because God is essentially loving and the Father of mercy, and nothing is so injurious to Him as to represent Him as a gloomy and terrible Master, ever armed with thunderbolts to annihilate us. It is, therefore, beyond all question that nothing is more detrimental to souls than to exaggerate the difficulty of being saved, and to put on grace a higher estimate than that put upon

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it by our Saviour Himself. And after all, His ministers are but the interpreters of His law. If, on the one hand, they are forbidden to conceal or disguise its true import and meaning or make it ineffective by unwarranted indulgence, they are, on the other, equally forbidden to render it odious and intolerable by culpable exaggeration.

And, as a rule, where is the good of so much rash declamation on the small number of the elect, the rigor of God's justice and the purity required for Holy Communion; or what good can come of discourses crammed with citations, often supposititious, the purpose of which is to give the appearance of a dogma to what has never been defined by the Church, or to transform into an article of faith some rigorous precept or individual opinion? Is not all this diametrically opposed to the wish and purpose of our Divine Redeemer, who sent His ministers not to frighten the people and drive them to despair, but to lovingly exhort them, to win them with kindness, to convert them and induce them to reform their lives?

And ought not that confessor who, more self-opinionated than zealous, is constantly giving rigorous decisions, mistaking counsels for precepts, and imposing as of strict obligation what are only aids to perfection, apply to himself the rebukes which our Lord uttered against the Scribes and Pharisees? To describe perfection as something so high as to be beyond the reach of ordinary mortals is, not to make it attractive and lovable, but rather to inspire in those who desire to attain to it a feeling of repugnance and aversion.

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And that other confessor, who is eternally presenting to sinners the most lurid pictures; who never speaks to them except in words of bitterness and reproach; who imposes upon them difficult and interminable penances; and who wearies and annoys them by repeatedly denying them absolution, contrary to every rule of sound theology,—does he not seem to have taken upon himself the dangerous task of discouraging weak souls, of keeping them from the sacraments and driving them to despair?

It is not that such priests do not know the difference between a counsel and a precept, or the enormous distance by which mortal is separated from venial sin, but they fear that if they should teach others this, as they are in duty bound to do, they would cease to be talked about, or to make an impression, or to cause people to wonder, or to disquiet consciences which they seem to delight in keeping in a constant state of unrest and agitation. But is this the spirit of the Lord? *You know not of what spirit you are.*[1] If one must choose between kindness and rigor, between mildness and severity, is it not clear that, after the pattern of our Divine Master, it is better to incline to clemency, sweetening the bitterness of the remedy, lest the sinner should refuse to take it, and thus losing his present opportunity for salvation, never have another? But a confessor will say: If I am less strict I fear I shall burden my conscience.—Rather, you will most certainly burden it if you are hard and pitiless. Listen to what St. John Chrysostom says on the subject: Is it not

[1] Luke ix. 55.

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better to be distinguished for mercy than for a species of cruelty? When the master of a house is generous and open-handed it is not becoming for his stewards to be avaricious. If God is full of mercy, why should His ministers show themselves inexorable? Will you be a shepherd after the manner of the Apostles and all apostolic men? Then be severe with yourself and tender towards others.

Judging from effects, excessive severity in morals is equally as pernicious and disastrous as laxity. Both, each in its own way, deprave morals, destroy faith and ruin souls. It is necessary to keep a middle course between these two rocks and while avoiding one not get wrecked on the other. But to do this an exact and precise knowledge of the doctrine of Jesus Christ is necessary, in order to transmit it to the people just as He brought it from heaven, and just as the Church transmits it to us, without adding to it or taking from it a single iota.

All indeed must be holy, but the same degree of sanctity is not required in all. There are many mansions in our Heavenly Father's house; in an army all need not be heroes; what, however, is required of every soldier is that he give his attention to the work assigned him, do his duty on the field of battle, and behave with courage in the face of the enemy. It is sometimes difficult to bring a penitent to discharge a disagreeable duty, or to make a sacrifice painful to flesh and blood; but the confessor should not on that account compromise either with passion, which is always self-willed and stubborn, or with weakness, which is ever

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ungenerous and cowardly. Charity, however, will require him in such cases to smooth away difficulties in as far as he can do so, and to encourage the penitent. He will say to him: First of all, do this, or this, because this much is quite within your power; as to the rest, trust to God and pray fervently, and you will see, if your prayer is earnest and really meant, that He will infallibly hear you and strengthen you in spite of your weakness. There is, says St. Gregory, a happy mean between kindness and severity, a prudent way of combining the two, which every priest should study to learn and practise. The secret lies in so tempering the one with the other that the penitent will be neither repelled by excessive severity nor encouraged in his sluggish ways by excessive gentleness.

An illustration in point is the case of the Good Samaritan who bound up the wounds of the man he found friendless on the way to Jericho: *He bound up his wounds*, says the Gospel, *pouring in oil and wine*[1] —wine to revive his spirits and restore his strength, and oil to soften the acidity of the wine lest it might aggravate his pain. Without this timely mixture the wounds of the soul will remain, nay, they will grow worse, certainly they will not be healed.

[1] Luke x. 34.

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EPILOGUE TO THE THIRD CONSIDERATION.

The priesthood is a mission; every priest is one who is sent; he is an apostle, *missus apostolus*. He is a continuator of the mission of Jesus Christ. As such what are the virtues which he should possess? St. Gregory and St. Bernard tell us. From various passages scattered up and down their writings and brought together here we can form to ourselves a perfect pattern of what a holy priest and a good pastor should be.

Pastor eligendus sit vir probatus, non probandus, quia in curia plus deficiunt boni quam meliorantur mali.

Assumendus potius cunctans et renuens, quam volens et recurrens. Compellendus intrare qui præter Dominum timeat nihil. Nihil speret, nisi a Domino.

Sit in cunctis bene moratus, in consilio providus, in jubendo discretus, in disponendo industriosus, in agendo strenuus, in loquendo modestus, in silentio discretus, in adversitate securus, in prosperitate devotus, in zelo sobrius, in misericordia non remissus, in otio non otiosus, in convivio non effusus. Cunctis passionibus moriens spiritualiter vivat. Prospera mundi postponat, nulla adversa pertimescat, sola interna desideret, pietatis visceribus affluat. Vulgus non spernat, sed doceat; divites non palpet, sed terreat; pauperes non gravet, sed foveat.

Pascat gregem exemplo ædificationis, verbo prædicationis, fructu orationis.

Habeat bonitatem, disciplinam, scientiam; prima dat exemplum, secunda corripit, tertia instruit.

Habeat eruditionem, sed multo magis unctionem, quæ sola docet de omnibus.

Caveat ne, alios juvando, se deserat; ne alios elevans, cadat —in omne re plus fidat orationi, quam suo labori.

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Non de severitate sit oneri, nec de familiaritate contemptui. Sit illi necessaria oris custodia, quæ tamen affabilitatis gratiam non excludat—amabilem se præbeat, non verbo sed opere. Reverendum se exhibeat non fastu sed actu.

Animum habeat liberum, nobilem, firmum, invictum, amplum. —*Liberum*, quem nulla sibi vindicet violenta occupatio;—*Nobilem*, quem nulla retrahat indigna affectio;—*Firmum*, quem nulla concutiat repentina turbatio;—*Invictum*, quem nulla fatiget etiam continuata tribulatio; *Amplum*, quem nulla coarctet rei temporalis amissio.

Actu sit severus, vultu serenus, verbo serius.

Tales habeat familiares, quos postmodum elegisse non pœniteat, tales qui frænent præcipitem, dormitantem excitent, quorum libertas excedentem corrigat, extollentem reprimat, quorum constantia nutantem firmet, erigat diffidentem.

Hence a priest, a good pastor, who wishes to continue and reproduce in himself the apostolic life of our Saviour, is a man who prays and toils, a man who is learned and zealous, a man, in fine, who is modestly virtuous and capable of sublime sacrifices. His life is spent among his books, whence he draws from sources approved by the Church the knowledge that makes the theologian and the master in ecclesiastical science; in his oratory, where he speaks to God in secret of his own needs and those of his people; at the Altar, where, united with the Great Victim of propitiation, he stands as a mediator between an offended God and a guilty people; in the confessional, where, lifting his hands in absolution over the sinner, he sends him forth justified and innocent; in the midst of children, whom he teaches to lisp the catechism, that marvellous alphabet of divine wisdom; at the bedside of the dying, whom he assists to pass peacefully from this life to the next.

What a beautiful, noble, sublime mission is that of a parish priest who is truly an apostolic man! How many sinners are converted by his exhortations, how many souls rescued from hell, how many just confirmed in well-doing, made perfect and led up to the very portals of heaven!

When he will have finished his course; when, broken with labor, he comes to die; when he has departed hence, will he be

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mourned? will he be missed? When his parishioners accompany his mortal remains to their last resting-place on earth, will they remember his sacrifices, be grateful for his kindness? Possibly; yet it is quite as possible they may be ungrateful. But what matters it, what good are words of praise spoken at the grave? This good priest toiled on earth, but his hopes he placed on high. He had no aim while a wayfarer here other than to take up and carry forward the work committed to him by Jesus Christ; to instruct, to console, and to save, according to his opportunities, the present generation, and to leave to generations to come the heritage of faith and its immortal hope.

This great mission he discharged with zeal and gave to it the sacrifice of a life always laborious and at times painful, a life ever noble and pure, and now he has entered into the reward of his labors and is at peace in the bosom of God: *For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulations, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*[1]

ORATIO S. F. XAVERII PRO CONVERSIONE GENTIUM, HÆRETICORUM ET PECCATORUM.

Æterne rerum omnium effector Deus, memento abs te animas infidelium, hæreticorum et peccatorum procreatas easque ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam conditas. Ecce, Domine, in opprobrium tuum his ipsis infernum impletur. Memento Jesum dilectum Filium tuum pro illarum salute atrocissimam subiisse necem; noli, quæso, Domine, ultra permittere ut Filius tuus ab infidelibus, hæreticis et peccatoribus contemnatur, sed precibus sanctorum virorum et Ecclesiæ sanctissimæ Filii tui sponsæ placatus recordare misericordiæ tuæ, et oblitus idololatriæ, contumeliæ et malitiæ illorum, effice, ut ipsi quoque agnoscant, timeant et diligant aliquando, quem misisti Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum qui est salus, vita et resurrectio nostra, per quem salvati et liberati sumus, cui sit gloria per infinita sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

[1] II. Cor. iv. 17.

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Consideration Fourth.

THE SUFFERING LIFE.

THE priest on entering the Sanctuary pledged himself to a life of self-denial, contradiction and suffering. This will be shown in the present *Consideration*. It is not enough, however, for him to accept suffering himself, he must also bring the people over whom he is set to accept it, since all a Christian's knowledge is contained in the Cross: *But we preach Christ crucified.*[1] Hence it is very important in entering upon this subject to begin by explaining the meaning of suffering, viewed in the light of faith, first, for Christians as a whole, and, next, for the priest in particular.

Section First.

CHAPTER ONE.

CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON SUFFERING.

GOD has wrought two great works in this world, creation and redemption. The purpose of both was not the same. The primitive creation is a work of Wisdom and Omnipotence. It is a luminous revelation of the goodness of God; its proportions, in number, weight and measure, are admirably symmetrical; and it is only necessary to study it attentively to perceive the harmonious relations of part with part and the unity of design pervading the whole.

[1] I. Cor. i. 23.

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But alas! the day came when the wise of the world, gazing upon this triumph of God's power, refused to recognize its Author. From that day forward the unalterable purpose of God was to confound the wisdom of the philosophers of this world. Every device of His love was employed to rescue the souls of men and reconquer the world; but instead of doing so by manifesting His power and greatness, the Almighty God deigned to become a child, and the Infinite to come down from on high.

In this new manifestation God comes to us in a way that baffles our reason; He comes in prophecy, leaping from mountain to mountain, from hill to hill; He comes from heaven to the crib; He goes from the crib to the Cross; from the Cross to the sepulchre; from the sepulchre to the prison below, and thence back again to the heights of heaven. Everything is above and beyond the ordinary and sets all human reasoning at defiance.

Tertullian in his energetic way says: God showed Himself daringly bold and blissfully foolish: *Christum bene impudentem et feliciter stultum;* and before him St. Paul had said: *For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleases God by the foolishness of our preaching to save them that believe.*[1]

Still, we know that this folly and weakness are only apparent: *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man.*[2]

Love of independence and love of pleasure, pride

[1] I. Cor. i. 21. [2] Ibid., i. 25.

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and voluptuousness were the two sources of sin, the two vices into which men had sunk. The instrument of man's offending must also be the instrument of his punishment. The sentence which condemns us to undergo humiliations and sufferings is then supremely just and irrevocable.

The fact that a Saviour came into this world to ransom fallen humanity does not on that account imply that man is to be exempt from sorrow and to escape affliction in this life. This would be an inversion of right order, and would require that a decree of justice should be set aside to give place to a suggestion of mercy.

And on the other hand, were our miseries to weigh upon us for all time as an intolerable burden, which no power could remove, our condition would indeed be inexpressibly sad, hopeless and beyond remedy.

And it is precisely here that the mystery of folly becomes the mystery of the highest and most sublime wisdom.

The Word-made-Flesh did not choose to exempt us from humiliations and sufferings, but He did what is better, infinitely better, He changed evil into good; He, who was innocent, associated Himself with the guilty, took upon Him the weight of sin and its punishment, and made of punishment a remedy for sin.

We were condemned to groan in this valley of tears, to suffer without merit, to die without hope; and the evils endured in this life were to be but a prelude to the more terrible evils that awaited us in the next. But see the happy change wrought in our destiny by

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our Saviour. Our pains and trials, if we will have it so, will be limited to our present life; and after having suffered here and endured the sting of death, Jesus will make us, in the next world, immortal, impassible and eternally happy. Even in this life our miseries will take on another nature and, from being a reproach and a burden, will be a joy and an honor. The Son of God subjected Himself to them, and in so doing He mitigated their severity, ennobled them, sanctified them and made them the sources of our greatness and happiness.

In this way Jesus Christ opens out before us a new world, where everything is changed in name and aspect; He heals our evils, not by removing, but by transforming them. He teaches us the marvellous secret of finding riches in poverty, glory in humiliation, joy in suffering and even life in the embrace of death, changing our very miseries into so many stepping-stones by which we mount up to glory and happiness.

Love of self and contempt of God were the sources of all the crimes and misfortunes of man. Love of God and contempt of self will be the principle from which man must set out to return to God and regain his lost inheritance.

This is why our Saviour in His discourses and, more than all, by His example, never ceases inculcating the necessity of giving up the world and of enduring suffering as the one and only means of salvation: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his life*

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will lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake will find it.[1]

The day on which the Man-God was lifted up on high to die on the Cross He gave to these words a new meaning and an added strength, which none but He could give: *Omnem doctrinam suam patibulo roboravit.*[2]

The question of suffering is the great social problem; it has been discussed by men in every age of the world. In the hope of solving it the wise of the world, philosophers and politicians, have dreamed utopias, excogitated systems and created revolutions. The utopias come and go, philosophical systems rise and disappear, revolutions startle the world and are forgotten, but suffering remains and humanity still groans under its weight: *jugum grave super filios Adæ.* There will always be misery and want, sickness and suffering in this valley of tears, because there will always be sin and sinners.

To human philosophy pain and anguish are an inexplicable phenomenon; being ignorant of their cause, it cannot point to their remedy.

But is suffering really an evil? No, for the stricken willingly undergo painful surgical operations in the hope of being restored to health; the soldier accounts as nothing wounds received in gaining a glorious victory; a mother is joyful even in the midst of the pains of childbirth, because she will soon press her first-born to her bosom.

Why is it, then, that men chafe under suffering and raise their voice in protest against it? It is because

[1] Matt. xvi. 24. [2] St. Jerome Ad Algas. Q. 5.

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their suffering is barren, inglorious and without consolation.

Jesus Christ has taken from suffering these three stigmas, which rendered it so repulsive and dreaded by mankind. He has made the barren fruitful, the ignominious glorious and the desolate joyful and sweet. Let us examine how He is the great Healer of our maladies and the one Consoler of souls in distress.

And, first, He has made suffering, which was barren, fruitful. Adam and Jesus Christ are both heads of the human family; both are fathers; both are the patterns of their respective households; and both have impressed their likeness on their children. As long as we bore upon us in shame the image of the first man we were like him earthly and carnal, ingrates and rebels. We suffered, but our sufferings did not satisfy for our sins or expiate our offences; they were chastisements and painful to bear, but they did not cleanse from the sinner the stain of his guilt, because his will was still obstinate and his heart malicious.

But no sooner were we united with Jesus Christ through sanctifying grace, and bore upon us the image of the God-man, than the spirit of penance and the warmth of divine love entered into our hearts, and our sufferings were forthwith transformed, so that from being barren they became fruitful to satisfy for sin and merit eternal life. United with the new Head of our fallen race, we followed in His footsteps and through pain and sorrow reconquered the Kingdom we had lost. Who will dare, then, stigmatize as an evil that through which so splendid a conquest has been made?

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And next, Jesus Christ took from suffering its reproach. Throughout all the ages of pagan antiquity the miserable and afflicted were shunned and regarded with feelings of aversion. They were thought to be stricken by the gods and pursued by fate.

When Jesus Christ came all this was changed; these false ideas were corrected and the dignity of suffering and the majesty of misfortune were exalted before the world. Taking upon Himself our miseries and clothing Himself in the livery of the poor and the distressed, He ennobled suffering and made poverty glorious. And did not the greatest of our orators speak in the presence of the court of Louis XIV. of *The Eminent Dignity of the Poor of Christ?*

Were not the most splendid monuments of our cities inspired by misery and suffering? Have not the most illustrious princesses and the most powerful monarchs been frequently seen serving the poor and the sick on bended knee? Finally, how many thousands of men have in all ages voluntarily enrolled themselves under the banner of poverty, of humiliation and trial, thus proclaiming to the world that it is glorious to suffer under a King crowned with a diadem of thorns!

It was indeed a miracle of surpassing grandeur to have made glorious what the world has ever spurned as vile and abject, but it was a still greater marvel to have made pleasing and delightful that from which every instinct of nature involuntarily shrinks. Do we not all naturally and as if by compulsion shrink from pain and suffering in every form? And yet how many generous Christian souls have devoted their lives to

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ministering to the stricken and afflicted, throwing themselves into the work joyously and with a kind of spiritual delight?

Possibly this statement will be challenged. But facts cannot be gainsaid, and to such facts the lives of all the Saints and all historic monuments bear unerring witness: *I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all tribulations*,[1] said St. Paul, and the same sentiment has been repeated by all those great souls who have peopled heaven after having edified the world.

Take the martyrs as an instance. To what if not to divine power are we to ascribe the joy and the enthusiasm of love which they exhibited while enduring the most frightful torments? Pagan Rome saw with surprise and amazement one of its citizens, reduced to the extremity of sacrificing his life to save his country, deliver himself up to death without a moment's hesitation. Historians have exhausted their eloquence and poets have employed their genius in extolling and glorifying so magnificent an example of splendid and determined valor. But Regulus was a warrior accustomed to face danger; he was intrepid because he loved the glory which is its reward, as Virgil says: *laudisque immensa cupido*. But this achievement is a solitary phenomenon in the annals of history.

The Church furnishes still higher and more disinterested examples of splendid courage, not alone in isolated individuals here and there, but in millions of heroic men and women, tender virgins and helpless

[1] II. Cor. vii. 4.

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children, who voluntarily and gladly endured barbarous torture and went to their death more joyfully than others to a wedding feast, mounting the gallows with radiant countenances and exulting hearts. Whence came this joyous cheerfulness which sported with pain and smiled in the presence of death ?

Their hearts were far away; their souls had gone out from their bodies and had sought and found a refuge in the wounds of their Redeemer, where they no longer felt pain, or, if they did, they triumphed over it with invincible courage and supernatural strength. *Inde tolerantia martyris provenit*, says St. Bonaventure, *quod in Christi vulneribus tota devotione versetur, et jugi meditatione demoretur.* Strengthened by this thought and by the invisible presence of their Saviour, the martyrs stood firm and calm and peaceful, converting their torments into so many victories. While their bodies were being rent and their entrails torn out with hooks of iron, they gazed unmoved as their life-blood poured in torrents from their gaping wounds. Where were then the souls of those generous Christians ? They were secure in the everlasting Rock, in the bosom of God, whither they had entered through the wounds of Jesus Christ as through heavenly gates ajar. *In illo stat Martyr tripudians et triumphans, toto licet lacerato corpore et rimante latere ferro, non modo fortiter, sed et alacriter suum e carne sua circumspicit ebullire cruorem. Ubi ergo tunc anima martyris? Nempe in tuto, nempe in Petra, nempe in visceribus Jesu, vulneribus scilicet patentibus ad introeundem. Si enim in suis esset visceribus, scrutans ea ferrum profecto*

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sentiret, dolorem non ferret, succumberet et negaret. Nunc autem in Petra habitat; quid mirum si in modum Petræ duruerit? Sed neque mirum si exul a corpore dolores corporis non sentiat. Neque hoc facit stupor, sed amor. Submittitur enim sensus, non amittitur; non deest dolor, sed contemnitur.[1]

Thus the Son of God has taken upon Him our miseries, transfigured and glorified them with the splendor of His divinity. A man like unto us in all save sin, He gave Himself up to sadness, to weariness and fear; *He began to fear and to be heavy*,[2] and He thus became the source of our strength and our joy. Dreading the chalice of His Passion, which He had so longed for throughout His whole life, He fell upon the ground, and, as the Prophet says: *Put His mouth in the dust*,[3] in order thus to lift up His disciples from the earth and give to His martyrs the courage and endurance of heroes. He underwent an inexpressibly cruel agony, during which blood poured from all His veins and purpled the earth, and by this outpouring merited for men firmness and intrepidity, and made even the weak and timid, to whom the very sight of suffering was a torture, strong and joyful in the face of danger. All this He gave us as a largess of grace, but it was first purchased at a great price by Himself. As St. Leo says: *Nostræ infirmitatis effectus participando curabat . . . venerat enim in hunc mundum dives et*

[1] St. Bonaventure in Prolog. Vitæ Christi. He has himself taken the beautiful passage from St. Bernard.

[2] Mark xiv. 33.

[3] Lament. iii. 27.

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misericors negotiator cœli. . . . nostra accipiens et sua retribuens.[1]

Jesus Christ, seeing in vision the reproaches and tortures that awaited Him, said to His Father: *Thy will be done.* These words of the Head, says St. Leo, have brought healing to the whole body. They are at once a lesson and an example. To them confessors owe their zeal and love, and martyrs their perseverance and crown. *Hæc vox capitis salus est totius corporis, hæc vox omnes fideles instruxit, omnes confessores accendit, omnes martyres coronavit. Nam quis mundi odia, quis tentationum tenebras, quis posset persecutorum superare terrores, nisi Christus in omnibus et pro omnibus diceret Patri: Fiat voluntas tua?*[2]

Crux tua omnium fons benedictionum, omnium est causa gratiarum, per quam credentibus datur virtus de infirmitate, gloria de opprobrio, vita de morte.[3]

Now that pain has lost its terrors for us and its repellent aspect, we shall not be frightened or surprised when we are brought face to face with suffering of every kind; for this we cannot escape or evade; it is part of our great and sublime mission.

But why is it that priests have a greater duty to suffer than simple laymen? Here are two reasons that will partially account for it.

First, because all the reasoning of philosophy and its maxims, beautiful though they be, would be ineffec-

[1] St. Leo, Serm. II. De Passione Christi, c. 4.
[2] Ibid.
[3] St. Leo, Serm. VII. De Pass. n. 7.

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tual to bring men to embrace the doctrine of suffering, so contrary to every natural instinct and inclination. Such a doctrine must appeal to sense, it must be seen, it must be illustrated and enforced by example.

Now, on whom does the obligation rest of illustrating by practical example the great principle of self-denial and sacrifice, of poverty and patience, if not on the priest, who is sent to preach the Gospel, to be in his own person its living commentary and an interpretation that all can understand?

Another may endure poverty and want, but he does so in spite of himself. His condition may evoke sympathy and excite pity, but it does not on that account teach a lesson or render less tolerable the sufferings of others. He alone is voluntarily poor who freely makes choice of a life of hardship. St. Francis of Assisi, poorly and scantily clad, and, on this occasion, shivering with the cold, was accosted by a man, who no doubt thought himself witty and very clever, who said to the Saint in a tone of banter: Friend, will you sell me a few drops of your sweat? No, replied the Saint, I shall sell them to God at a better price. This is a lesson that every one can understand, and it teaches us that suffering is not an evil.

A second reason why the life of a priest should be a life of suffering is this: He is in the supernatural order a father: *In Christ Jesus by the Gospel I have begotten you.*[1] Every birth of a child into this world is necessarily an occasion of pain and sorrow. This is the divine decree that went forth after the fall: *In*

[1] I. Cor. iv. 15.

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sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.[1] This decree is carried out in the order of grace as well as in the order of nature. Jesus Christ dying on the Cross brought us forth unto everlasting life. Mary is the Mother of God, and she is also the Mother of the elect. God, her Son, was born of her without pain; nay, this first birth was for her an occasion of transport and ecstasy, but this was not so in her second childbearing. Mary became our Mother on Calvary at the foot of the Cross. There, says the Abbot Rupert, she paid with usury the pains from which she was exempt when she brought forth into the world the Blessed Fruit of her womb. The Catholic Church is the only legitimate Spouse of Jesus Christ. Children are born of her daily, but they grow in number and are conducted by her to the haven of their eternal rest in the midst of every manner of trial and persecution. Every one who pledges himself to the work of saving souls must expect to suffer if his ministry is to be profitable: *In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.*

[1] Gen. iii. 16.

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Section Second.

Two facts explain the sufferings of Our Lord during His natural life and the cruel and ignominious Passion which brought it to a close.

1st. He announced Himself to men as the enemy of sin, against which He declared a ceaseless, an irreconcilable war. This stirred up against Him the passions of the wicked and their unremitting persecution.

2d. Jesus Christ offered Himself a surety and victim for the sins of men, and hence He had to undergo the pain and punishment due to sin.

Now, the priest is the living personification of the Word-made-Flesh and the continuator of His mission. Hence the priest should drink the same chalice that He drank, as willingly and with the same intention. His life ought to be the continuation, the progress and the completion of the sufferings and Passion of Jesus Christ. Hence there are two reasons why the priest should, like his Saviour, endure trial:

1st. Because by his calling, and the duties that calling imposes, he is the enemy of sin and the antagonist of evil.

2d. Because he offers himself to the divine Justice a surety and victim for sinners.

CHAPTER I.

THE HATRED OF THE WICKED THE FIRST CAUSE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST AND OF HIS MINISTERS.

THE wisest of the ancient philosophers, some centuries before the coming of Christ, used these words: "As he who should so well conceal his vices as to gain the honor due to virtue would be the meanest of

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men, so ought he be esteemed the most virtuous who by his very virtues should excite against himself such hatred and persecution as *to lead to his death on the cross.*"

This is a wonderful statement, and more wonderful still coming from the lips of a pagan philosopher. To the Fathers it seemed almost a prophecy, foretelling the future Passion and death of the God-Man. At any rate this observation of Plato reveals a deep and intimate knowledge of the depravity and corruption of the human heart.

Jesus Christ in coming into the world found there only sin and sinners. Now it would seem that, as the sick should not decline the services of their physician, so neither should sinners refuse the ministry of their Saviour. Yet all lifted their hands in anger against Him.

Jesus was more an object of contradiction, accusation and scandal than was Moses or Jeremias or any of the Prophets. He is a Prophet, say some. No, say others.—Then He is Christ. And they answer: Can Christ come out of Nazareth? When Christ appears we shall not know whence He comes, but whence this one comes we know. He is seditious and forbids tribute to be paid to Cæsar. He loves wine and good cheer. He is a Samaritan and a blasphemer, in that He makes Himself the equal of God. He is possessed of a devil and casts out devils in the name of Beelzebub.—Who of all the Prophets was ever the object of such slander, such contradictions as these?

The motive of their animosity was this: Jesus Christ,

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more than any and all the Prophets, laid bare the truth with a clearness that was irresistible; and these men could not endure the truth; it was a witness against them, and their condemnation. They wished to close their eyes to their sins and to live on in false security, lest, seeing them, they would be obliged to repent and amend their ways.

Let us lie in wait for the just,[1] said the Pharisees and doctors of the Law: *Let us examine Him by outrages and torture.*[2] And why? Because His works are a rebuke to ours; because by His teachings and virtues He witnesses against us and lays open our vices and depravity.

Jesus Christ came to make war on error and vice and to set up everywhere the kingdom of truth and justice; this it was that stirred up against Him the passions of the guilty; this it was that armed against Him hell and its hosts and at last compassed His death on the Cross.

The Passion of the Saviour did not stop with His Person; it has been continued, and will go on to the end, against those who represent Him.

Let us consider for a moment a problem of history the solution of which the unbeliever can never know. The war waged continuously for more than eighteen centuries against the Catholic priest is one of the most surprising phenomena in the history of the human race, a phenomenon that would be inexplicable did we not seek its cause in the order of grace.

[1] Wisd. ii. 12. [2] Ibid. ii. 19.

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Nations war against nations, and class against class. This we can understand. But the priest, why make war on him? He is not a foreigner, or, if so, not an alien; he is a fellow citizen, speaking the same language, obeying the same laws, loving devotedly the same country they love who persecute him. He makes no claim to be one of a caste apart or of a privileged class; his ranks are recruited from every grade of society, and into it he welcomes all, the humble and the high-born, rich and poor, who wish to associate themselves with him in his work and mission.

There are family feuds whose baleful fires are not quenched even in the ashes of the tomb, and are handed on as a fatal heritage from father to son. But such implacable hatreds were provoked by injustices and outrages, and to vindicate rights violated or ignored. But the priest has wronged no one; he is a harmless man, a man of peace and charity.

What, then, is the indictment against him? With what crime is he charged? Why is he an object of obloquy? Is it possibly because he wears a dress peculiar to his calling? No, and the proof of it is this: If a priest here and there has been so faithless to grace as to be known as one of little or no faith and of questionable morals; as one who, wearing the ecclesiastical garb, leads a worldly and scandalous life, such a one will be welcomed and praised, exalted and protected by the most bitter enemies of the clergy.

What, then, is the offence of the priest? His narrowness and foolish prejudices, say some; his absurd opinions in religious matters, which he proclaims with

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as much assurance as if they were so many heaven-inspired doctrines.

Let us grant that he is deceived. He has certainly plenty of company. There are in the world Jewish rabbis and Protestant ministers; Lutherans and Anglicans, Calvinists, Presbyterians and Pietists; muftis among the Turks, and bonzes in India and Japan; and will it be said that these ministers of worships so contradictory and conflicting are all teaching the truth, while the Catholic priest alone is a teacher of error?

No, no one will be so bold. And yet all these are left in peace. They may be despised, but they are neither hated nor persecuted. Why, then, is the Catholic priest alone singled out for hatred and persecution?

Because he is, you say, the foe of enlightenment. Those who make this charge do not believe it. They well know that the priest has ever been engaged in dispelling the darkness of ignorance and in bearing through the world the torch of science.

Yes, but he is ambitious, you will say. This accusation is absurd. No one in the world occupies a more humble position than a priest. He is not engaged in commerce or trade. He does not enter into the strife for lucrative offices and profitable employment. And even if he did, there is no law to forbid him; he would only be availing himself of the same rights and privileges as others. He would then be, not an enemy, but a rival, like so many other millions of men who are ever active and on the alert to successfully prose-

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cute their designs, and who crowd and jostle one another along all the avenues that lead to fortune.

Search as you will, and you will find no motive for this violent hostility against the Catholic priest except that assigned by our Lord: *Because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*[1] The cry of the world is: *Glory to riches*,—to honors and pleasures. The cry of the priest is: *Woe to you that are rich.*[2] This means war and no mistake. When the priest loses his ecclesiastical spirit and receives with favor the maxims of the world, or when the world, in a lucid interval, receives with sympathy the maxims of the Gospel, there is a suspension of hostilities, a truce, a lamentable truce in the first instance and a happy one in the second, but in neither of long duration.

On each side the old spirit revives and war breaks out afresh. The violence of the enemy is always directed against those priests who are most generous and most loyal. The more you are like your Divine Model, your Saviour and your God, the more certainly will you be the target for the calumnies, the abuse and persecutions of the wicked.

One thing is clear, namely, that it is not the man, but Jesus Christ, that is, truth and virtue, who is persecuted in the priest. All this noisy clamor, then, against priests, which wearies the ear and is borne in upon us from the four winds of heaven, is but the prolonged cry of the deicides: *Away with Him, away with Him.* Away with this man; we will not bow to the authority of God, nor will we submit to the yoke of

[1] John xv. 19. [2] Luke vi. 24.

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duty; we will obey only ourselves, and follow whither our passions lead. The priest protests against our pride; he rebukes our vices; he threatens us with the vengeance of God; he is a torment to us and pursues like a vision of hell: *Away with him, away with him.*[1]

This is the solution of the enigma, the explanation of that strange and unnatural hatred against the priest. There are two camps; on the one side are the Catholic priests bearing a banner on which are inscribed words uttered by angels at the cradle of their Divine Founder: Glory be to God, and peace to men, through humility, self-denial and chastity; and on the other side are ranged pride, voluptuousness and every delirious passion, on whose banner is emblazoned the legend: War against God, and death to priests.

And this is as it should be. The priest is a man of God, sent to carry on and continue the great work of the redemption of mankind, and to gather together the elect from every part of the earth. On the other hand, hell wars without ceasing against the accomplishment of God's designs and, in order to drag down the posterity of Adam to the pit below, arms all its adherents against the priest. All the worst passions of men are let loose against him, and like so many stormy billows rise in their anger, beat upon him, and threaten to engulf and destroy him.

In the end his lot is such as was foretold. It was clearly predicted of him that he would attract to himself, as if by a natural law, the malice and fury of the wicked and the love and veneration of the good. The

[1] Luke xxiii. 18.

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disciple is not above his Master. If they have persecuted Me, said Jesus Christ to His Disciples, they will also persecute you. You shall be dragged before tribunals, you shall be scourged, you shall be cast into prisons, you shall be condemned to death.

Priest of God, you knew all this, you were aware of the dangers of your mission, and you cheerfully accepted the burden. You are a priest because you wished to be one; you saw before you conflicts, contradictions and trials of every sort; still you did not hesitate, you said generously with St. Thomas: *Let us also go that we may die with Him.*[1]

How beautiful and ennobling it is to share the toils and fatigues of our Saviour, Jesus Christ; to make God known to men; to preach the Gospel to the poor; to proclaim His mercy to sinners; to assure the unfortunate that they have a Father in heaven, and that the pains of a day can merit an eternity of bliss! Yes, it is beautiful to carry on the glorious mission of our Divine Redeemer, and to be with Him engaged in the work of saving our brethren, even though we should in the end like Him die on the Cross: *Let us also go that we may die with Him.*

Therefore, O priest of Jesus Christ, your glory and your happiness consist in this: to be for His sake a mark for calumny, abuse and persecution. This will be a proof that you are a foe to the world and its vices, and that you worthily represent Him who smote the world with His anathema: *If you be reproached for the*

[1] John xi. 16.

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name of Jesus, you shall be blessed.[1] . . . *They indeed went from the presence of the Council rejoicing, that they were accounted worthy of suffering reproach for Jesus.*[2]

Fear not the world, it can harm only the body; fear it not, for He has overcome it: *Have confidence, I have overcome the world.*[3]

[1] I. Peter iv. 14. [2] Acts v. 41. [3] John xvi. 30.

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CHAPTER II.

PATIENCE AND GENEROSITY UNDER TRIAL AND PERSECUTION ARE THE PRIEST'S PLEDGE OF VICTORY IN THE CONFLICT.

How did Jesus Christ overcome the world, and how will you overcome it? Jesus Christ overcame the world by the innocence of His life: *Which of you will convince Me of sin?*[1] He overcame it by gentleness and prayer: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*[2] He overcame it by His very sufferings and by the reproach of His Passion.

When did He gain His completest and most splendid victory? Was it not when, exposed to the derision of the multitude and forsaken of earth and heaven, He expired on the cross? *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.*[3]

The Son of God would not honor pride by opposing it with strength and power, He would beat it down and overcome it with weakness. Conquerors gain victories by the aid of armies; they gather about them great battalions and thousands of warriors; but our King to overcome hosts of enemies had need only of a Cross of wood. His strength was in His transfixed hands fastened and nailed to the Cross. From the

[1] John viii. 46. [2] Luke xxiii. 34. [3] John xii. 32.

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Cross, after binding at His feet all the powers of earth and hell, He went up to heaven, taking with Him in triumph to the Capital of His own Kingdom the souls of the just whom He had set free: *And despoiling the principalities and powers He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself.*[1]

Jesus Christ then, in making you a sharer in His priesthood, wishes you to exercise it as He Himself exercised it. Contradictions, humiliations and trials of every sort are the elements on which will depend the success of your undertaking.

And is not this precisely the secret of the triumph of the Apostles? Going forth from the Upper Chamber they preached the resurrection and divinity of their Master. How were they received? These men, it was said, are drunk, they have gone mad. We absolutely forbid you to speak in this Name. The Apostles went on in their work and mission paying no heed to this prohibition. They were arrested, scourged, driven from city to city, from village to village, and the whole world rose up in arms against them. But what was suffering or glory or reproach to them? They went forward through evil report and good report, in the face of abuse and calumny, and they ended by overthrowing the empire of Lucifer and victoriously carrying the Cross to the very ends of the earth.

St. Paul was cast to the earth on his way to Damascus, and by grace transformed from a persecutor into a great Apostle; the secrets of heaven were revealed

[1] Coloss. ii. 15.

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to him and he was given the mission of carrying the name of Jesus Christ to kings and peoples. What a magnificent and glorious vocation! But listen to what follows: *I will show him what great things he must suffer for My sake.*[1]

All apostolic men owe their wonderful success in great undertakings to painful trials and humiliations. Take St. Ignatius as an instance. He was a high-born gentleman of chivalrous and undaunted courage, of consummate prudence and resolute character. Touched by grace, he wished to give to his faith the service of his high gifts and exalted virtue. He had the zeal, the fervor and the generous enthusiasm of an Apostle, and was aflame with the desire of throwing himself at once into the work of saving souls. But wait awhile, Ignatius, your time has not yet come; the life of an Apostle requires a training; God indeed has a great destiny in store for you, but first of all you must be tried in the fires of humiliation; you must go up and down the countries of Europe and gather a good harvest of calumny, abuse and persecution; you must be discredited and dishonored before the world, treated as a heretic and reputed an impostor, and when you are covered with reproach as with a garment, your Lord will say to you: *I will be favorable to you at Rome*, and you will be the Founder of an army of Gospel-workers. Taught by the example of his Divine Master and by his own experience, Ignatius learned the secret of the mysterious fecundity of the

[1] II. Cor. vi. 8.

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apostolic ministry, and for this reason he asked God that the Company of which he was the Founder and Father should never be free from persecution, and history bears witness that his prayer was heard.

If God sends you much suffering, rejoice and be glad, for this is an indubitable sign that He has designs upon you and wishes to make you an instrument for the increase of His glory. The fire of zeal never glows so warmly in the heart as when it is fed by the wood of the Cross, for it was with this that the Saviour made perfect the holocaust of Himself.

You say you are accomplishing nothing in your parish and that your best efforts are fruitless. But tell me, have you ever subjected yourself to great humiliations? Have you ever been in the midst of exasperating struggles? Have you bravely borne up under painful trials? No. Well, then I am not surprised that the field you are trying to till has not produced a good yield. You have not fertilized it, and how can you hope that a wealth of harvest will cover it?

Some souls are cast down and discouraged when they meet with opposition and impediment in their pastoral ministry. This comes of a lack of faith and because they do not understand the ways of God. Christ's mission in this world was to overcome wisdom with folly, pride with humility, riches with poverty, strength with weakness, and He chose that which is not to confound that which is. The Redemption is a creation more marvellous than that of the universe; it is a work based on the nothingness of rebel man, and still maintained by the same nothingness against all

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the powers of earth and hell leagued together for its overthrow and destruction.

Show me, if you can, the human supports by which the Church is sustained, the secret of her life, and her means of defence against the countless enemies who assail her and have assailed her in every age and country.

Princes of the earth in their conflicts with her have employed every resource of their power, and soldiers armed to the teeth have done their bidding against her. What did she oppose to these hostile demonstrations of brute force? Her naked and defenceless bosom. The enemy dealt her foul blows and rent her fair form, and when his fury was satiated he fell and passed away, because he was but man, and the Church lives on full of strength and vigor, because she is borne up and protected by the mighty hand of God.

Still her victories, though signal and decisive, are not such as dazzle the world and call forth the applause of men. Her life in this world is not a life of triumph in the ordinary sense; it is a struggle for existence; her glory and her triumph are reserved for another time and place. Here all is conflict and trouble, and if she wins trophies in spite of the opposition of hosts of enemies, open and secret, they are won silently and borne modestly. Such is the condition of the Church on earth, and such should be the life of a good priest, because such was the life of Him whose minister and representative the priest is.

There is a very rare work, written in Latin by an Italian bishop, in the seventeenth century, entitled

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De Consolatione ad Episcopos. In this work the writer, to console and encourage his brethren in the Episcopacy, goes on to show how every bishop who faithfully discharges his office will be obliged to endure, in the course of his pastoral ministry, all the various kinds of pain and torture suffered by the martyrs, and the numerous passages which he quotes from the early Fathers go to prove that this was also their conviction.

Now, every faithful priest set over a parish is, in his own measure and degree, in the same position as a bishop in his diocese; he has the same trials to endure, the same sort of opposition to contend against and the same persecution to suffer. He may then, if he will, as well as a bishop, reap a martyr's merits and secure a martyr's rewards.

This is surely a most comforting thought. Jesus Christ looks down upon us from His throne in heaven; He supports us in our struggle; He prepares for us our crown in the world to come, and even in this He gives us a foretaste of the joy of victory. The blood of the first martyrs was the seed of other Christians; and neither will the trials of the priest and his persecutions, if courageously borne, be barren of fruit. When Jesus Christ exposes us, as He Himself was exposed, to the malice of men, He thereby makes us sharers in the abounding fruitfulness of His humiliations, sufferings and death.

Consider what has happened in France almost within our own memory. The impious, having proscribed and massacred the ministers of the Sanctuary, openly boasted that they had buried the Church in the dark-

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ness of the tomb and closed the opening with a stone which no human hand could remove. God bided His time and, when the moment came to put these men to shame, the Church and her ministers, despite the sealed entrance and the watchful guards, came forth triumphant from the grave, victorious over the trials to which they had been subjected. The assaults and persecutions of which they had been the victims only served to enhance the brilliancy of their victory and to reveal in living light the Divinity of the Church, the power of the priesthood and the necessity of their ministry for the peace and happiness of mankind. And who knows how many souls owe their eternal salvation to the sufferings of those generous confessors and to the blood shed in this revolution by its glorious and triumphant martyrs?

Such is the drama that has been enacted and will continue to be enacted to the end of time in the Church, among the priests of Christ, and throughout the whole history of the human race. We could show this at length were this the place to go into the subject.

The antagonism of the world, its vices and its malice are not, however, the only cause of the sufferings of Christ and of those who continue to carry on His work. The following Section will reveal another cause more deep and far-reaching.

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Section Third.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF TO HIS FATHER AS A PLEDGE AND VICTIM FOR THE SINS OF MEN; HE WAS THEREFORE OBLIGED TO SUFFER THE PAIN AND PUNISHMENT DUE TO SIN. THE PRIEST, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST, SHOULD DO THE SAME.

I.

BEFORE the guilty could enjoy the benefits of God's mercy it was necessary that the Saviour should take upon Him the rigors of God's justice.

For three years Jesus Christ went up and down Judea announcing the Kingdom of God, calling men to salvation and to a life of sanctity. And what was the fruit, what the result of all this hardship? He was barely able to gather about Him a handful of disciples. And such disciples! How weak and rude and imperfect! They had for a teacher the Man-God, they were formed in His school and under His eye, and yet in spite of such teaching and such example they were not wholly changed or transformed into His likeness. No, teaching and preaching were not enough, not even the teaching and preaching of the Messias; it was further

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necessary for Him to speak to His Father with the voice of His blood, because He was not only a Master come to teach the truth, He was also a mediator between guilty man and an angered God; He was both priest and victim, to offer Himself and to be offered up, as an adequate satisfaction for sin. Heaven and earth must be reconciled, justice and peace must kiss. But God did not wish to grant peace without a price, or to show mercy regardless of His justice. And since sinners could not themselves purchase their pardon, it was necessary that the Negotiator of this great treaty of peace should offer Himself as a pledge and make Himself responsible for the entire debt.

The conditions were accepted by the Man-God, and we should attentively consider what He suffered, and with what courage and constancy, when the time came to fulfil these conditions.

All the punishments which God had decreed to visit eternally upon sinners were poured out upon the Saviour in the day of His Passion: *The sorrows of hell encompassed Me.*[1]

After the last and irrevocable sentence the reprobate will have to suffer in hell three sorts of chastisement: the gnawing remorse that will eat out the heart: *their worm shall not die;*[2] the living fire that will consume the body: *I am tormented in this flame;*[3] and the malediction of God that will rest as a perpetual curse upon the soul, and blight every vestige of hope in the heart: *Depart from Me, ye cursed.*[4]

[1] Psalm xvii. 6.
[2] Isai. lxvi. 24.
[3] Luke xvi. 24.
[4] Matt. vii. 23.

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To rescue us from these chastisements, which are the wages of sin, Jesus Christ endured His Passion; being made a surety for all sinners, He submitted to suffer as if He were guilty of all sin.

Behold Him in the Garden of Olives, where He presents Himself to His Father as one bearing the guilt and the shame of having outraged His Divine Majesty. Here He lets loose upon His heart a flood of sorrow and a sea of bitterness: *Great as the sea is Thy destruction.*[1] What is the explanation of this overwhelming dereliction of the Man-God? During all the days of His mortal life He had enjoyed the beatific vision and experienced in His soul all the joys of heaven; but from the moment He made Himself the universal and vicarious penitent of the human race He suspended the torrents of delight that had flooded His heart, and put to one side and denied Himself the joys of the Godhead, that His soul might be laid bare to insult and sorrow: *sequestrata delectatione divinæ æternitatis*, says St. Ambrose. He saw before Him, as in a vision, all the sufferings that swept over and wrung His heart—the fear, the sadness and the grief; and to all He gave free access: *He began to fear and to be heavy.*[2] He called upon His Father and prayed to Him, kneeling with His face on the ground: *He fell flat upon the ground and He prayed.*[3] Behold the posture, the attitude God requires in one who would make Himself the advocate and the mediator for sinners. But this intense sorrow was not enough. In hell there is physical and sensible

[1] Lament. ii. 13. [2] Mark. xiv. 33. [3] Ibid. xiv. 35.

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pain, and hence Jesus Christ must also endure bodily suffering.

God said to Job: *I will ask thee, and answer thou Me.*[1] We can fancy that some such dialogue took place on Calvary. The Eternal Father looked upon His Son in a sense as a creditor does upon a debtor. My Son, we can fancy Him saying, You know there is a compact between Us. You have taken upon You the iniquities of the children of Adam. I have promised pardon but on condition that You undergo the punishment of them. Do You see that Cross? That is the punishment that awaits You.—My Father, I am ready: *Behold I come.*—You know, My Son, that You bear upon Your hands the abominations of all those guilty hands that have been stained with the blood of their fellowmen; that have wronged others and unjustly taken of their substance; that have been polluted by shameless deeds. To expiate these murders, thefts and impurities Your innocent hands must be pierced and nailed to the Cross.—I am ready and willing, My Father; and stretching out His hands, Jesus said to the executioner: Here are My hands, strike, pierce and nail them to the Cross.—My Son, Your feet represent the feet of those who run in the ways of sin, and to expiate their deeds of guilt Your innocent feet must be bored through with nails, and out of the wounds Your blood must flow in streams.—I am ready and willing, My Father; and stretching His body upon the Cross, Jesus said to the executioner: Strike, nail Me to the Altar of My sacrifice. Heavenly Father, see to what a condition Your

[1] Job xxxviii. 3.

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only Son is reduced: *They have dug My hands and feet.*[1] I have no longer hands with which to work miracles, nor feet to go and carry Your Name to the tribes of Israel. There is surely nothing more for Me to suffer. Is not this enough? Is not Your justice satisfied? No, My Son, man has abused all his senses. In hell every sense has its own punishment, such is the decree, and You must bear the full rigor of it.—And Jesus Christ had to remain three long hours on the Cross in order that every sense and every single part of His body might suffer unutterable pain. His eyes looked down upon the executioners who tortured Him, upon the rabble who contumeliously reviled Him in His agony, upon His Apostles who abandoned Him, and upon His Mother who stood weeping at the foot of the Cross. His ears were assailed with the blasphemies and imprecations which foul lips uttered against Him. His tongue burned with thirst, and they gave Him vinegar and gall to drink. His body was one great sore, one encompassing, ceaseless pain: *See if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.*[2] And yet all this was but a small part of His suffering, because it was not yet the equivalent of what the damned endure in hell, their most bitter punishment being the perpetual consciousness that the malediction of God is upon them and ever pursuing them like a torment. This is why the picture presented by Jesus Christ before He expired is so terribly appalling.

When He was utterly forsaken by all creatures, He sought comfort in the bosom of His Father; but His

[1] Psalm xxi. 17. [2] Lament. i. 12.

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Father withdrew from Him, repulsed Him, filled Him with unspeakable grief, broke His heart. It was then our Saviour cried out in an agony of woe: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*[1]

Startling words these. Was then the hypostatic union of the Word with the Sacred Humanity broken or interrupted? No, by no means; such a thought would be impious and a blasphemy. Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross was ever, and never for a single instant ceased to be, the Man-God, the Holy One, the Innocent, the Only Son of the Father, and the object of His everlasting love. How, then, was He abandoned and thrust away by His Father? What is meant is that He was utterly and absolutely shut out from and deprived of those interior unctions and consolations, of that heavenly union of God with the soul, which is the joy of the just and the strength of martyrs in their sufferings. Not so much as a drop of this Divine balm fell upon the Cross to assuage and sweeten the desolating sorrow of my Saviour. He drank to the dregs the chalice of His Passion, bitter with the bitterness of sin and death. The sweet and consoling influences of the Godhead dwelling in Him were suspended; the divine strength, by which His manhood had been heretofore sustained, was withdrawn and His Sacred Flesh was left in all its natural weakness and infirmity to bear the great flood of sorrow that swept in upon and crushed His Sacred Heart: *Caro factus*, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, *permisit carni ut sua pateretur*.

[1] Matt. xxvii. 46.

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Jesus endured the awful dereliction on the Cross in order to prevent sinners from being forever separated from God in eternity: *Derelictus est ne nos derelinqueret*, says St. Cyprian.

II.

By voluntarily offering Himself a victim for the salvation of the world Jesus Christ discharged His office of Mediator and Pontiff of the New Covenant. If you wish to be a worthy successor in His priesthood, you must, after His example, generously offer yourself up a victim for the salvation of your brethren, content to live and die without human comfort and, if God so wills, without divine solace.

And why? For two reasons. First, because God wants generous ministers, who will serve Him for His own sake and not for His favors. We must have grace, but its consolations are not necessary for us. In grace there are two elements, strength and sweetness. God at times, while giving the one, withholds the other. St. Paul is an instance of this. Assailed by a great temptation, he had the strength to overcome and gain a triumph. Did he also taste the sweetness of grace? No, for he groaned and trembled and would not be comforted until God gave Him this assurance: *My grace is sufficient for thee.*[1]

The second reason is this. Since the saving of sinners cost Jesus Christ the last drop of His blood, so must their salvation be for the priest a travailing of

[1] II. Cor. xii. 9.

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pain and sorrow. It is meet and right that he who applies the fruits of redemption should enter into and be filled with the spirit of Him who has merited them.

Here is a priest distinguished for zeal, he is talented and energetic; he discharges the external duties of his ministry with fidelity and elicits the praise of all; he relieves the poor, teaches children, visits the sick, is devoted to the confessional; he preaches regularly and has the gift of eloquence. Such a one surely should be able to sanctify his whole parish. And yet all his toil and talents are to no purpose; he accomplishes nothing. He himself is surprised and is at a loss to account for his failure. Crowds come to listen to me, he says, but no one is converted by my words.

And why is this if not because he neglects the most important part of his mission, the most essential element of success? The task to be accomplished is to reconcile a sinner with his God. To every reconciliation there are two parties, and both must be dealt with and the interests of the one harmonized with those of the other.

Offended justice demands reparation, calls for blood, or at least for tears of repentance, which are, as St. Augustine says, the blood of the heart. But who will give this blood and these tears? Certainly not the sinner, for he is not yet converted, grace has not yet touched his heart. You, you yourself must offer to the Divine Majesty those penitent tears and thus move Him to have mercy upon the transgressor and grant him the grace of conversion.

This is the way in which St. Paul understood the

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apostolic ministry. He relied for success upon the sufferings which he patiently endured for the salvation of sinners, and upon the tears which he shed. He spoke confidently to men, because he had already, by his humiliations, his pains and his sorrows, pleaded eloquently with God. This is how he speaks to the Thessalonians: *For you yourselves know, brethren, our entrance unto you, that it was not in vain.* And why? He himself gives us the reason: *Having suffered many things before and being shamefully treated at Philippi, we had confidence in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God.*[1]

Saints have ever been kind and indulgent to poor sinners, but if they have been so, justice has never on that account been defrauded of its right. They made ample amends to God in secret for the punishment they remitted to penitent transgressors.

St. Francis Xavier, after hearing the confession of a great sinner gave him a very light penance. Why, my Father, asked the penitent, do you impose so light a satisfaction for sins so enormous? My dear child, replied the Saint, don't mind; I will make good what is lacking on your part. And in fact for days after the Saint endured a most rigorous fast and scourged his body to the blood. The blood of the just mingled with the blood of our Divine Redeemer is a satisfaction meet for justice, but the blood of the sinner is not.

Our Saviour through His sufferings and His death on the Cross redeemed the world, and do you really continue to carry forward this same ministry of regen-

[1] I. Thessal. ii. 1.

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eration and salvation inaugurated by Him, through the same means? Look for a moment upon Jesus Christ, study Him; now look upon and study yourself: what a difference between the Original and the copy! This is the secret, this the explanation of the little fruit of your ministry. Cast yourself at the foot of the Cross, and do not rise from there until you are fairly convinced in heart and soul that you must suffer, must die to flesh and blood, if you wish to make yourself and others holy: *Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*[1] Dig about a tree and fertilize it; its roots are nourished, its trunk grows strong and healthy; it puts forth blossoms in the spring-time and gives abundant fruit in the autumn. So also humiliations, scorn and persecution are the soil in which great virtues thrive and flourish and bear fruit; and in the measure in which a priest bears up courageously under pain and abasement will be his success in this world and his reward of glory in the next.

Oh, how the priesthood, consecrated and tried by affliction, fills me with admiration when I consider it as impersonated in Jesus Christ; but how am I stricken with shame and filled with confusion when I consider it in myself! Trial and pain were inseparable from the priesthood in the Man-God, and do I dare to be His minister, to go up to the Altar and offer up the Victim of Calvary, without suffering as did the great High-Priest, Jesus Christ?

St. Paul tells us that *Jesus in the days of His flesh*

[1] John xii. 24.

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with a strong cry and tears offered up prayers and supplication.[1] His sufferings taught Him what it was to obey, and at what a price sinners are redeemed. Is the order of Divine Wisdom changed? Am I a priest on conditions different from those of the great High-priest, Jesus Christ?

O my Lord, what then is a priest of the New Law, if he does not continuously bear about in his body the mortification of Jesus Christ, if he does not glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ; if *he goes not forth to Him without the camp*, that is, if he forsakes not the world, *bearing His reproach?*[2]

I tremble, O my God, under the burden and responsibility of a ministry the duties of which until now I have so little understood and so imperfectly appreciated. I betake myself to Thee, O High-priest, Holy and Immaculate; to Thee who art in the heavens above; to Thee whose mercy is as great as Thy infinite power. I cast myself into Thy arms, I take refuge in Thy sacred wounds. May Thy blood blot out my transgressions and be the stay of my weakness. May I begin now at last in the exercise of my ministry to be filled and penetrated through and through with the spirit of mortification and a love of penance, that thus I may merit the grace to save myself and be the salvation of my brethren.

[1] Heb. v. 7. [2] Ibid. xiii. 13.

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CHAPTER II.

THE STUDY OF THE CRUCIFIX.

Epilogue to the Fourth Consideration.

ONE day St. Bonaventure went to visit St. Thomas, and with all the affectionate frankness and humility of a friend said to him: My brother, where do you get the beautiful things which all so admire in your works? There is my Book, said St. Thomas, pointing to the Crucifix. This answer was not lost on St. Bonaventure. How skilled he was in the reading of this Great Book, and what lessons he drew from it for the admiration and edification of the faithful, is well known. Its language and sense are not within the reach of all. Only a few privileged souls grasp its depth of meaning. In the silence of the night Pythagoras contemplated with admiration the harmony of the celestial spheres. Galenus read in the fibres of the human body a magnificent hymn to the glory of the Creator. Every Christian who has studied ever so little in the school of St. Paul can read the Crucifix and find there hope, consolation and love.

But there are few who can read all its pages, who can measure the height and the depth of the mystery of a God dying on the Cross, a mystery which St. Paul

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calls the *power* and the *wisdom* of God: *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*[1]

This is granted only to a few privileged intellects, or rather to pure souls who have made great progress in sanctity. The human intellect, when it comes to consider with the light of reason alone the marvellous paradox of a God, who fills with His immensity all space and time, reduced to the dimension of a manger and a Cross, shrinks back baffled and frightened: *Domine, consideravi opera tua et expavi.*

Stupent Angeli, exclaims St. Peter Chrysologus, *miratur cœlum, pavet terra, caro non fert, auditus non capit, non attingit mens, tota non potest sustinere creatura, æstimare non sufficit, credere pertimescit*, so marvellous did it all seem and ineffable, and the Saint adds: this is the mystery that amazed and frightened the Saints: *Sacramentum pavoris sanctorum.*

The friends of Job, seeing him covered with sores and lying on a dunghill, were so bewildered and shocked that they remained seven days without speaking a word. But what is Job on a dunghill as compared with Jesus Christ on the Cross? *Job in sterquilinio, Christus in patibulo.*

The Cross is the great, the august tribune from the height of which the Divine Master teaches His Disciples. *Signum illud ubi erant fixa membra morientis, cathedra fuit magistri docentis*, says St. Augustine. This is the Book in which His teachings are gathered together, and the priest, whose duty it is to convey them to others, should study it unceasingly, lest what

[1] I. Cor. i. 24.

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Philip said to the eunuch of Queen Candace should be said to him: *Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?*[1]

And what will the priest find by assiduously studying this Book? He will find there:

1st. The knowledge that makes teachers.

2d. The zeal that makes Apostles.

3d. The courage that makes martyrs.

1. The Knowledge that makes Teachers.

In times past divine knowledge was the result of long application and toilsome research. The Book of Ecclesiasticus gives us a graphic picture of the labor and application required to gain this knowledge. Happy the man, it is said, who seeks wisdom and tries to discern its footprints: *Who goeth after her as one that traceth; who looketh in at her windows and hearkeneth at her door; who lodgeth near her house, and fastening a pin in her wall, shall set up a tent nigh unto her . . . under her shelter and under her branches; who shall be protected under her cover from the heat and shall rest in her glory.*[2]

Even before the Incarnation Christ was the rule and pattern of the just; but it was difficult to make out His figure; His outlines were but dimly traced in the Old Law, and it required close attention and careful study to follow in His path and not go astray. It was necessary to hearken at the door to what Wisdom said within; to look in at the windows to discover what went on in

[1] Acts viii. 30. [2] Ecclus. xiv. 23–27.

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the interior of the house, the doors of which were closed against those without; to set up tents on her confines, under her shelter and protection, and there wait until she should come forth and reveal herself.

But from the day when Wisdom spoke, not by the mouth of Prophets, but in His own Person, by teaching and example, revealing to us His most secret thoughts, His path has been so luminously marked out that it is impossible to mistake it or go astray. All His ways and all His footsteps lead up to Calvary and the Cross, and when I am at the foot of the Cross I have only to open my eyes to learn without pain or labor whatever is necessary for me to know to save my own soul and to safely guide those which have been committed to my care: *Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Jesum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium.*[1]

What does Jesus Christ teach me from the cross?

1st. He teaches me who God is.

When I contemplate the Crucifix I am forced to cry out: Oh, how great is God! How great is that God who by a word creates a world out of nothing; who suspends the sun in the vault of the heavens, and scatters stars in the firmament as the wind scatters dust on the plain; who is borne on the wings of the wind and with a look shakes the columns of heaven, making the earth to tremble and reel as one drunk; who touches the mountains and they vanish and are not! Such is the God of Moses and the Prophets.

But a God who cannot be worthily honored save by a Man-God, whose outraged majesty can be duly

[1] Tertull. de Præscrip. III.

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repaired only by the sacrifice and immolation of a God equal in nature and perfect as Himself—such is the God of the Christians. Now I know enough; now I have an adequate idea of the greatness of God.

I again contemplate the Cross and cry out: Oh, how holy is God; how shocking is sin in His sight; how sternly, how inflexibly will He pursue it!

Set aside the consideration of the sin of the Angels and its everlasting punishment. Even the fall of the Angels and their punishment in the prison below can give us no adequate idea of the malice of sin or the greatness and intensity of its chastisement. No, only the Cross can do this.

Set aside the deluge and the havoc it wrought. God's creation was pure and beautiful to look upon, but seeing it corrupted and defiled He spurned it and destroyed it. This we can understand; but the Cross, that baffles us.

Put aside hell and its devouring flames. Man should have aimed to go to God, should have striven with might and main to find in Him peace, and the one motive and end of his being. Instead, he departed from Him voluntarily and with his eyes open, and in consequence, forsaken by Him and following his own inclinations, he went headlong over the precipice into the bottomless pit, into hopeless despair and endless misfortune. All this, even, we can take in; but the Cross, that is beyond us.

O Cross of my Saviour, O Blood of my God, how awful, how terrifying is the idea thou givest me of sin! If God dealt so sternly, so unrelentingly with His own

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Beloved Son because He offered Himself a surety for sinners, how inexorably will He deal with sinners themselves, who have so abused the price of their redemption? If the Holy One, the Saint of Saints, falls crushed under the blows which justice inflicts, because there is upon Him only the semblance of sin, what must the sinner expect whose heart is the home of its guilt and the spring of its malice?

Once more, I contemplate the Cross and cry out: How good is God! How rich in mercy! Everything about me speaks to me of God's goodness. I look up into the vault of heaven and out upon the world, and on everything is written in words of light: These are the gifts and blessings of thy God. But the language of the heavens and the earth is not so articulate or so full of meaning to my heart as is the sight of the Crucified One. When I gaze upon that Kingly brow crowned with thorns; upon that august face bruised and bloody; upon that burning tongue and those parched lips; upon that divine body furrowed with wounds, then I begin to bring home to myself the excess of the love of my Saviour and my God: *For so God loved the world.*[1] From all these wounds issues a voice clear and articulate and throbbing with love, saying: *Son, give Me thy heart.*

What does Jesus Christ teach me from the cross?

2d. He teaches me how great is the price of my soul: *Tanti vales.*

At the foot of the Cross I can put a high value upon myself without fear of sinning against humility. Of

[1] John iii. 16.

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myself I am nothing, I have nothing of my own but sin. Hence I must despise myself as such and everything I am or have; this is but meet and just. But I have been purchased at a great price, my soul has been all washed and crimsoned over with the blood of a God. In the order of grace it is of inestimable value and infinitely precious. God forbid that it should ever through human respect become the slave of the world, or the slave of the devil through some baser passion. I want to save my soul.

Has my life heretofore been such as to be a pledge and guarantee of its eternal safety? The Cross will be my teacher, and from it I will seek counsel. A light mortification frightens me, the least trial or sacrifice disturbs and upsets me. I look up at the Cross and down into my soul, and I am ashamed of my unmanly cowardice.

I listen to Jesus Christ crucified, and He says to me: Be gentle, humble, patient, charitable. Choose the safer way, the more perfect. Take note of what I have done for your salvation. Study it all attentively and *go and do thou in like manner.*[1]

2. *Meditation on Jesus Crucified Kindles the Zeal which makes Apostles.*

The soul of the most abject and vile of men is worth as much in God's sight as my own. God has done no more for mine and no less than He has for it. Shall I then stand by indifferent and see it lost? Shall I not

[1] Luke x. 37.

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do my best to rescue it from hell? Shall I fear to do too much to save it? No, God would indeed be offended if I should show myself so ungrateful to my Divine Liberator. I have at length found the secret of self-oblation. The study of Jesus Crucified makes not only a well-instructed Christian, a great theologian, but also a zealous priest and a magnanimous apostle; an apostle who longs for toil and sufferings; who spends his days in teaching, enlightening and consoling his brethren and bringing them to eternal life; whose charity rises to the height of heroism; who says with St. Paul: *the charity of Christ presseth us;*[1] who, conscious of the great need of serving his fellow men and saving their souls, stops at no sacrifice, no, not even at the sacrifice of his own blood and life.

In the year 1793 a priest of Besançon gathered about him in the shelter of the forest a few Christians who wished to serve God secure from persecution. This worthy shepherd, however, did not limit his labors to his little flock; he frequently went forth from his hiding-place in search of other souls.

One day word was brought him that the mother of one of his exiled brother priests was dangerously ill. He immediately set out to visit her. His sudden appearance frightened a good old servant of the family who met him. My dear Father, he said, what do you mean? You are going to certain death. This seemed true, because the lady whom he had gone to visit had a son who was a violent revolutionist, and who never quitted the bedside of his sick mother, in the hope,

[1] II. Cor. v. 14.

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doubtless, of seizing any priest who might come to attend her. That matters not, replied the man of God, the soul of this lady is more valuable than mine. So saying he entered the room and went straight to the son, who was sitting by his mother's side. Sir, he said, kindly leave me alone for a half-hour with your good mother, and then I shall deliver myself up into your hands. The son was stupefied, for an instant he stood motionless, then throwing himself into the arms of the apostolic man, said: I never had a conception of such sacrifice. Let my mother have the benefit of the signal blessing which God has sent her. His mother received the graces of the sacraments, and the priest departed unmolested. His was the courage of a hero; he knew the worth of a soul.

Such is the price of souls when weighed in the scales of the Cross, and such is the price put upon them by those apostolic missionaries who forsake home and family and all the comforts and joys of life and generously throw themselves into the midst of perils and go to the ends of the earth to bring the glad tidings of the Gospel to the savage and the heathen.

As a priest I admire them, and at times I entertain a holy envy of them. And were it not better, you will say, for me, then, to follow their example? But may I not have an opportunity of doing apostolic work without crossing the sea? Is it so uncommon to find among our villagers and the inhabitants of our cities and towns neglected souls as dear to the heart of God as are the souls of the far-away Pagans? How many poor children are there round about us whose parents

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have little or no faith, who are sunk in ignorance and festering in vice? And are not these as precious in the sight of God as the children of the Chinese and other heathen? and have they not cost our Saviour as great a price?

I shall go to the aid of these unfortunate children, and since a God has shed His blood for them, shall I be doing too much if I consecrate to their salvation my time, my toil, my sweat and my life? *I have compassion on the multitude because they have nothing to eat.*[1]

3. The Courage that makes Martyrs.

What is a martyr? According to the etymological signification, a martyr is a *witness*, and the Church applies this name to those who shed their blood or sacrifice their lives for the sake of the faith. It is necessary in order to merit this glorious title to suffer death at the hands of the enemies of the faith, or at least to receive a wound of which in the natural course of things death is the consequence. Theologians commonly say that one who endures death in defence of virtue or to avoid committing sin for the sake of Jesus Christ is truly a martyr.

But besides the martyrdom of the body, or martyrdom strictly so called, there is a spiritual martyrdom or one that is the reward of trials and anguish of soul. Such was the martyrdom of our Blessed Mother, whose soul was pierced with a sword of sorrow so sharp and

[1] Mark vii. 2.

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desolating that she is not only called a Martyr, but the Queen of Martyrs. It is in this sense that the Church speaks of St. Martin as a martyr: *O sanctissima anima, quam, etsi gladium persecutoris non abstulit, palmam tamen martyrii non amisit.* And in the same sense St. Thomas interprets the words of St. Paul: *If a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*[1] This is true also of the time of St. Paul and of the first three centuries of the Church, as the Abbot Rupert remarks: *Tunc enim respersa sunt omnia sanguine Pastorum; maduerunt campi cædibus Pastorum; cruentata sunt pascua vulneribus Pastorum; sacrata est terra corporibus Pastorum; ditatum est cœlum animabus, quas Pastores pro ovibus suis posuerunt.*[2]

We shall not likely have the occasion or the good fortune, like the early Apostles, to shed our blood or suffer martyrdom of the body for the salvation of our brethren, but we can and should be martyrs in spirit, and this martyrdom is sometimes of longer duration and more painful than the martyrdom of blood and death.

In this age and in the actual condition of society what is the life of a priest, who is truly zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, if not one long martyrdom, hidden, unknown of the world, a martyrdom which is secretly, slowly, silently sapping his life and killing him inch by inch? It is a martyrdom more cruel and, I will make bold to say, more meritorious than that which ends in a quick and glorious taking off, for to such a martyrdom can be aptly applied

[1] I. Tim. iii. 1. [2] Comment. in Joan. c. x.

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the words of Tertullian on chastity: *Majus vivere cum castitate quam mori pro castitate.*

This martyrdom of the soul was continuous with our Saviour, Jesus Christ. His outward and physical passion lasted only two days, but His interior passion, the passion of His soul, was with Him throughout His whole life. His soul was momentarily saddened and afflicted with the thought, which was ever before Him, that, in spite of all He was enduring to save men, multitudes of them would obstinately persist in being lost.

Similarly a good priest cannot look out upon the world without a feeling of sorrow and poignant grief. What a distressing sight meets his eyes? There he sees Christians who are such only in name and never practise their religion; heretics who have disavowed and repudiated their mother and are now become her calumniators and persecutors; Jews, the remnant of a people once beloved of God, still pursued by the curse of an awful crime; ignorant followers of the prophet of Mecca, who have converted the region of the rising sun and the most beautiful countries of the far East into a land of ruin and desolation; and, finally, he sees entire nations buried in the shadow of death, and shamelessly bowing the knee to idols whose worship is infamy.

The sight of so many people going blindly on to destruction brings to every true priest a feeling of sadness and distress. He cannot indeed extend to them a helping hand, nor can he speak to them to recall them from their wanderings, but their needs are ever before

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his mind, and his prayers are constantly going up in their behalf. He frequently transports himself in thought to desolate wastes, covered with perpetual snow or burning under a tropical sun, and follows in imagination his unfortunate brethren as they wander over mountain and valley, through city and desert. No place is inaccessible to his charity, and never for a moment does he cease to mourn and lament for those whom he can aid only with his charity and his prayers. But the sight of the Cross is ever reminding him that it is not enough to groan in secret; that he must be up and doing; that he must face danger, and, if need be, sacrifice his life, after the example of the Good Shepherd, to save souls.

Cicero says that any one who takes upon him the duties of Civil Magistrate ought to be ready to suffer all things rather than be faithless to his trust: *Pro communibus commodis adeundæ sunt inimicitiæ, subeundæ sunt tempestates, et cum audacibus improbis, etiam potentibus, est dimicandum.*[1]

But what is a civil magistracy compared with a divine such as is the priesthood? This demands still greater generosity and more painful sacrifices. St. Ambrose says apropos of this subject: *Si imperator peteret a me, quod suum esset fundum meum, argentum meum, jus meum; me numquam refragaturum respondi. Verum, quæ divina sunt, imperatoriæ majestati nequaquam esse subjecta. Si patrimonium petitis, incendite; si corpus, libentur occurram; si vultis in vincula trahere, trahite; si vultis in mortem rapere, rapite. Non ego me val-*

[1] Pro Sext. Roscio.

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labo circumfusione populorum, non altaria tenebo, vitam obsecrans; sed pro altaribus gratius immolabor.[1]

St. John Chrysostom when about to go into exile sent the following words full of courage and reliance on God to his people:

Multi quidem fluctus et undæ immanes, sed submergi non vereor. Quidquid terroris habet mundus, contemno. Quidquid delectabile habet, rideo. Divitias non cupio, paupertatem non horreo, mortem non timeo. Etiam si fluctus insurgant, etiam si totus pelagus adversum me conturbetur, etiam si principum furor invadat, omnia mihi arenæ et arenis fragiliora. Nemo enim nos a vobis poterit divellere; quos enim Christus conjunxerit, homo non separabit. Ego quidem a vobis nec morte divellar; ego millies pro vobis immolari paratus sum. Nec gratia mihi in hoc est; sed debitum reddo: Bonus enim Pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis.

No, a good pastor has no fear either of death or martyrdom.

Nihil durum, says Peter Chrysologus, *nihil amarum, nihil grave, nihil lethale veretur amor verus. Quod ferrum, quæ vulnera, quæ pugnæ, quæ mortes amorem prævalent superare perfectum? Amor est impenetrabilis lorica, respuit jacula, excutit gladium, periculis insultat, mortem irridet. Denique, si amor est, vincit omnia.*

Those heroic men, however, sought, not in themselves, but in the wounds of Jesus Christ, the superhuman courage and the enduring fortitude which sustained them under trial.

[1] Epist. 35.

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Previous to the passion of our Lord the Apostles were willing enough to enjoy the dignity of the apostolate and its honors, but they shrank from its humiliations, contradictions and sufferings. James and John were ambitious and had their mother to plead in their behalf with Jesus. What was our Saviour's answer? *You know not what you ask.* And He added: *Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?*[1] Observe, says St. John Chrysostom, that He corrects them by suggesting thoughts wholly different from their ambitious aspirations. You speak of honor and glory, He says, while I know only of struggle and conflict: *Non præmiorum hoc tempus est, nec illa gloria mea modo apparebit, sed cædis ac periculorum tempus præsens est.*[2]

Without the spectacle of the Cross the Apostles never could have known the mystery of suffering; this was to them an illumination of the Holy Ghost. But once the mystery was comprehended what a change was wrought in them! They are no longer ambitious for honor or glory, nor do they seek human ease or comfort; they rejoice and find their only delight in suffering reproach, in being persecuted, and in dying for the Name of Jesus: *They went from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.*[3]

Truly is Calvary a great and sublime school. The Saints, the great doctors and all apostolic men wished, like St. Paul, no other teacher than Jesus crucified:

[1] Matt. xx. 22. [2] In Matt. xx. [3] Acts v. 41.

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Hæc meditari dixi sapientiam; in his justitiæ mihi perfectionem constitui, plenitudinem scientiæ, divitias salutis, et copias meritorum. Hæc propterea in ore frequenter, sicut vos scitis; hæc in corde semper, sicut Deus scit; hæc stylo meo admodum familiaria, sicut apparet; hæc mea sublimior interea philosophia scire Jesum et hanc crucifixum.[1]

ORATIO

S. FRANCISCI XAVERII AD JESUM CRUCIFIXUM.

O Deus! ego amo te:
Nec amo te ut salves me;
Aut quia non amantem te
Æterno punis igne.
Tu, tu, mi Jesu, totum me
Amplexus es in cruce.
Tulisti clavos, lanceam,
Multamque ignominiam,
Innumeros dolores,
Sudores et angores
Ac mortem: et hæc propter me,
Ac pro me peccatore!
Cur igitur non amem te,
O Jesu amantissime?
Non, ut in cœlo salves me,
Aut ne æternum damnes me,
Nec præmii ullius spe,
Sed, sicut tu amasti me,
Sic amo et amabo te.
Solum quia rex meus es,
Et solum quia Deus es. Amen.

Absorbeat, quæsumus, Domini Jesu Christe, mentem meam ignita et melliflua vis amoris tui ab omnibus quæ sub cœlo sunt, ut amore amoris tui moriar, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es in ligno crucis mori.

ORATIO AD JESUM CRUCIFIXUM.

En, amantissime Jesu, qui sponsus sanguinum mihi esse voluisti, ad pedes tuos prosternor, ut meum in te amorem debitamque gratitudinem contester. Sed quid rependam tibi, mi

[1] S. Bernard sermo XLI in cantic.

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Jesu, qui usque in finem dilexisti me? Manibusque ac pedibus, imo et cordi tuo inscripsisti me, magno sane et conspicuo charactere. Quis mihi hoc tribuat, ut sicut tu me, ita et ego te cordi meo inscriptum circumferam? O Jesus, quam profuso me charitatis affectu complexus es, qui non tantum manus et pedes, verum et opulentissimum pectus mihi aperiri voluisti, ut inexhausta bonorum cœlestium affluentia desiderium meum expleas!

Salve, o benedictum vulnus lateris tui, mi Jesu; salve, o fons amoris, o thesaure inæstimabilis, o requies animæ meæ; ausimne, benignissime Jesu, ad sacram hanc aram, ad hoc sanctum sanctorum accedere ardensque amore cor tuum deosculari? Per infinitam bonitatem tuam oro te, mi Jesu, ne hoc solatio me privare, nec ab hac unici mei refugii domo arcere velis. Eja, anima mea, accurre cum fiducia ad thalamum suavissimi sponsi tui; hic te omnibus molestiis tuis ac curis quibus opprimeris, exonera: hic desideria tua cupiditatis exple; hic in optatissima pace conquiesce. . . . Ad sacratissimum hoc cordis tui vulnus, mi Jesu, omnia cordis mea vota ac desideria pono. Ita oro cor meum cordi tuo adstringe, ut nullo numquam tempore ab invicem avellantur, ut vere cum Apostolo exclamem: Quis nos separabit a charitate Christi? Tribulatio? an angustia? an fames? an nuditas? an periculum? an persecutio? an gladius? Certus sum, quia neque mors, neque vita, neque instantia, neque futura, neque ulla creatura poterit nos separare a charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu Domino nostro.

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Consideration Fifth.

THE EUCHARISTIC LIFE.

THE Blessed Eucharist is the treasure of the Church, whether the Church be considered as made up of the faithful scattered over the broad face of the globe, or as centred in each one of her members.

Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar is the Spouse of the Universal Church, her Protector and her Guide, her Light and her Master, her Teacher and her God. It is in the Sacrament of the Altar that He makes good His promise not to abandon her and to abide with her all days even to the consummation of the world. Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is the comfort of every member of the Church in affliction; his refuge, his strength and his stay in his daily trials; his abiding friend, the food of his soul, the source and centre of his spiritual life.

To the priest He is something more than all this. To him the Blessed Eucharist is everything. It is his all. It is the Blessed Eucharist that makes him a priest, since every act of his ministry leads up to this Divine Sacrament and centres in It. Take away the Blessed Eucharist and the priest ceases to be; take It away, and the tribunals of reconciliation will be closed; there will be no longer faithful to prepare for the Divine Banquet; no longer Holy Communion to distribute; no longer a sacrifice to offer to God; the priest will be useless, since all his other functions may be performed by laymen. This is why Protestantism, by denying the Real Presence, has slain the priest and destroyed the priesthood.

This premised, I say that devotion to the August Sacrament of the Altar is the distinctive characteristic of a good priest; of a priest who has a proper conception of his duty and his mission. This subject will furnish matter at once instructive to the intellect and consoling to the heart.

We shall divide it into three sections.

SECTION FIRST.

The marvels enshrined by Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist teach the priest with what reverence and profound respect he should treat this August Sacrament.

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SECTION SECOND.

The marvels wrought by Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist teach the priest how he should sanctify himself and labor for the sanctification of others.

SECTION THIRD.

Jesus Christ immolating Himself day by day on the Altar by the hands of the priest teaches the pastor of souls the spirit of sacrifice and self-immolation with which he should discharge every act of his ministry.

Section First.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS CHRIST LEFT THE BLESSED EUCHARIST TO HIS CHURCH AS A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL OF HIS GREATNESS AND LOVE. HOW THE PRIEST SHOULD PROMOTE THE PURPOSE OF THE SAVIOUR.

I.

The Blessed Eucharist a Memorial of Divine Love.

THERE are three great marvels which the Son of God, the Word-made-Man, wished especially to honor and to keep perpetually in our thoughts by instituting the Sacrament of the Altar. These are His eternal generation in the bosom of His Father, His generation in time in the womb of His mother, and His bloody death on the Cross for the salvation of the world.

1. And first His eternal generation. It consists in this. The Son of God is called the Word of the Father, which means that God the Father, speaking to Himself

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in a language secret, spiritual and divine, gave and communicated to the Person of the Son, whom He begot, His essence, His power, His wisdom, His goodness and all His perfections; and in giving them He lost none of them Himself; in communicating them, He deprived Himself of none of them; and, while they are all in the Son, they are all equally in their entirety in the Father.

Now, Jesus Christ wishes to keep this great mystery before our minds and to give us an image and a faithful representation of it in the Blessed Eucharist. He speaks by the mouth of the priest in Holy Mass, and in pronouncing these words: *This is My Body*, He gives His Church His own flesh, His own soul, His own Divinity; He gives Himself wholly to the Church and yet He loses nothing of Himself; He is entire in heaven; He is entire on the Altar; He is in His integrity in the hands of the priest and in His integrity at the right hand of the Father.

2. Next, His generation in time. What took place in the mystery of the Incarnation? The Divine Personality, or the Personality of the Word, took the place of the human personality, in the sacred humanity of our Saviour. The human nature was hypostatically united with the Word in the unity of the Divine Personality, but it was not absorbed by the Divine Nature, nor was it blended into one with it, nor did it lose its identity or any of its human properties.

In the Blessed Sacrament our Lord wished to recall to our minds this ineffable mystery, and to give us a representation of it. In the Blessed Eucharist the sub-

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stance of bread, which is the natural support and stay of the accidents, disappears; it is displaced and annihilated and the substance of the Body of Christ takes its place; it is no longer bread but the living flesh of the God-Man. The accidents, however, remain, the species of bread continue invariable, but they are no longer the result of the substance of the bread, they are miraculously sustained by the Body of Jesus Christ.

3. Lastly, our Saviour wished especially to leave us in the Blessed Eucharist a striking memorial, a living and articulate representation of His passion and bloody death on the Cross. Nay, it is more than a representation, it is an actual perpetuation of that mystery of love, as we shall presently see. But even as a memorial, as a perpetual monument of the great work of our redemption, how glorious, how divine is the institution of the Blessed Eucharist?

All great men who have rendered eminent services to mankind; legislators, who by wise laws have civilized and refined peoples; conquerors, who by their victories have extended the bounds of their empires, have one and all desired that their names should not perish from the fickle memory of men and that some witness to their beneficence should be handed on from generation to generation. To make sure of this what did they do? They selected some prominent and conspicuous spots and there they set up monuments of bronze or stone or other imperishable material, in the hope that these would defy the obliterating influence of time and carry down to remotest posterity the story of their deeds and the fame of their triumphs. Such

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are the trophies and the triumphal arches, the columns and the statues, the pyramids and the obelisks, set up by Egyptian, Greek and Roman.

In like manner Jesus Christ, the Immortal Legislator, the Divine Conqueror, having overcome hell and saved the world by the Cross; having founded a Church to which He left a body of laws of incomparable perfection, wished also to perpetuate the memory of such wondrous prodigies, and to set up in some place that might be seen of all the world a trophy which should commemorate His victories, be for all time a perpetual witness to His beneficence and an appeal to the love and gratitude of men. This trophy is the Blessed Sacrament of our Altars. His own command was: *Do this for a commemoration of Me.*[1]

A thousand years before the Royal Prophet had foretold that the Redeemer would leave this great monument as a witness of His love: *He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord. He hath given food to them that fear Him.*[2]

Now, this Trophy is set up in a place which is public and visible to all the world, that is, in our Churches, which are ever open, and upon our Altars, which are elevated that they may be seen by all: *And there shall be a firmament on the earth and on the tops of mountains.*[3]

Again, the trophies, statues and monuments of the ancients were not alone witnesses to the great and

[1] Luke xxii. 19. [2] Psalm cx. 4.
[3] Psalm lxxi. 16.

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heroic deeds which they commemorated, they were also asylums and places of refuge where slaves and even criminals fleeing from justice might find safety and be protected from the rigor of the law.

So likewise the adorable Sacrament of the Altar is not only a splendid memorial of the great deeds and signal benefits of a God and Saviour, It is also a place of immunity and safety, where the unfortunate will find a defender and protector, and the guilty be shielded and secured against the wrath of God.

That this great Eucharistic Monument, so glorious to our Divine Master and so useful and beneficial to men, should be insupportable to the devil and the object of his malignant hatred, is but natural and what might be expected. And as a matter of fact from Its institution until now this August Sacrament has been the object of his most malevolent assaults. For the last three hundred years especially he has directed against It all his power and the malice of his wrath. What an exultant song of triumph went up from all the hosts of hell when the Altars, which had been the abiding-places of this Heavenly Guest, were cast down and demolished by Protestant sectaries, among whom are now preserved only a travesty and a mockery of that divine reality!

But the Church has ever been and will ever be Its protection and defence, and her sons have stood and will stand as a bulwark between It and the assaults of Its enemies. She will never suffer this immortal pledge of the love of her Divine Spouse to be wrested from her; she will ever encompass It with the profoundest

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love and veneration of her children; and she will ever guard It as her most precious treasure, until the day when, all figures and symbols having flitted away, Jesus Christ will come visibly in His own Person to gather together His elect and conduct them to the home of everlasting joy and gladness: *You shall show the death of the Lord until He come.*[1]

The Blessed Eucharist is then a memorial of all the mysteries of the God-Man; it reminds us of what He was from all eternity in the bosom of His Father, and, above all, of what He wished to be to us in time; it is the compendium and sum of all the marvels of His power, His wisdom and His love.

But what do I say? It is not simply a memorial or barren representation. Jesus Christ is present and living in the Blessed Sacrament; there He renews and continues all the mysteries of His natural life; there He is incarnated and born anew day by day; there He is enclosed under the Sacramental species as once He lodged for nine months in the womb of His divine mother; there He dwells in a narrow tabernacle, where He abides through the long hours of the day and the weary watches of the night, hidden, silent and in darkness, as once He lived in the little house of Nazareth and the workshop of Joseph; there He prays and calls sinners to repentance; there He preaches humility, poverty and mortification; there He heals the sick and welcomes with ineffable sweetness the troops of worshippers who gather about His Person to hear the words

[1] I. Cor. ii. 26.

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of life that fall from His Divine lips; and finally, there He perpetuates for the saving of the world the great immolation of Calvary.

II.

How can a priest show that he fully appreciates the profound mystery of the Eucharist, and that he is deeply touched by the magnificent sight which reveals so much to us and which speaks so eloquently to our faith and so lovingly to our hearts?

He can show all this in four ways, namely: by his zeal for the cleanliness and adornment of God's sanctuary; by his piety and recollection in church; by frequently visiting his Saviour in the Sacrament of the Altar; and, above all, by devoutly celebrating the Divine Mysteries.

1. Zeal for the cleanliness and adornment of God's house.

As a rule our churches bear witness that this zeal is not lacking and all credit is due to priests who have a zeal so worthy and noble. But there are exceptions.

On entering the houses of some parish priests one will be shocked at seeing evidences of luxury and splendid living unbecoming a follower of Christ; but these cases are rare, and generally speaking one is pleased and edified with the order, neatness and propriety which are everywhere conspicuous. Now go from the house into the church. I do not say, examine the proportions of the church, its architectural symmetry, its graceful sweep of arch and other

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beauties of structure; for it is quite possible that the pastor has had nothing to do with all this; his duty has been and is to preserve what he received and to add to its adornment. But continue your inspection. What a Church! What a painful sight! The floor out of repair and frequently filthy; pews broken and overlaid with dust; walls black and unsightly; the Altar almost a wreck, with shelves in the rear, the receptacle of all sorts of rubbish; an Altar-cloth worn, mended and soiled, if not positively dirty, and such as no gentleman would ever dream of putting upon his own table; candlesticks broken, twisted, dilapidated and encrusted with wax and verdigris; the confessional, the pulpit and the sacristy squalid and covered with cobwebs. And the Altar-linen and sacred vessels! Of these reverence forbids me to speak. And the one who permits all this is a priest and lives in comfort, if not in luxury. Shame!

I shall be told that poverty is responsible for all this. Yes, but even so, it is not the poverty that disgusts and is a scandal; it is the dirt and disorder.—There is no one to care for the Church, the pastor will say.—No? And what are you doing? That is your business. Bear in mind the Church is the Palace of the King of kings, and no service you do Him or it can abase you. There is no employment in the House of God that can degrade. When Minor Orders were conferred upon you, you were granted the privilege and you accepted the obligation of discharging these lesser offices. These Orders, which you received on entering the clerical state, were not obliterated nor

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were they superseded when the Order of priesthood was conferred upon you.

If you only had a spirit of living faith and ordinary piety, all this would be clear to you.

2. A spirit of living faith and piety will also inspire a priest with that modesty, gravity and recollection which should always be conspicuous in him when he is in the House of God; nay more, it will make him careful to avoid the seeming indifference and unbecoming familiarity which at times he exhibits when handling the Mighty God. The Prince of Condé was one day in the Church of St. Sulpice, assisting at some function, and kneeling beside him was a Seminarist, to whom he said:

My dear sir, will you kindly tell me what you are taught in the Seminary? The Seminarist did not reply. The Prince, thinking he had not been understood, repeated his question, with the same result. Finally he insisted on an answer. Sir, said the Seminarist, we are taught in the Seminary to keep silence in Church. And I, returned the Prince, am very thankful for this warning, which from this time on I shall put in practice.

3. In the third place, he will show his faith and his love for the Blessed Eucharist by frequently visiting his Lord, who longs to give him His companionship in this his exile. Oh, if he only had the faith and piety of a truly apostolic man, he would, whenever he has a moment to spare, betake himself to the Sanctuary of his loving Jesus, and enjoy being in His company and in His Presence. But alas, what a con-

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trast! Courtiers crowd about the Princes and the great ones of this world, and the King of glory is left alone by His own ministers.

But, some one will say: I am so occupied, I have so many things to look after, that really I cannot spend hours at the foot of the Altar.—Yes, Jesus is well assured of this, and hence He does not exact it. He is not a hard Master, rather He is a most indulgent Friend and one easy to satisfy; He has even a delicacy lest He should make Himself burdensome or irksome to others. He wishes you to take all the time necessary for the discharge of the duties of your ministry. He wishes you also to look after your own affairs and your own wants; to eat and to sleep and to take your recreation; and all this time He is content to remain alone.

But could you not at certain hours of the day find time, just a few minutes, to go and pay Him your respects and offer Him your homage? Could you not run to Him in the morning and dedicate to Him the first-fruits of the day? Could you not come back in the evening to thank Him for the favors you have received; to ask pardon for the faults you have committed; to commend to Him the success of some work you have in hand, the reconciliation of those who are at enmity, the conversion of some sinner, the grace of a good death for one about to depart this life?

It is not necessary to recite long prayers or to use certain formulas. A heart full of gratitude and love will have no difficulty in spontaneously expressing itself in words of tenderness and affection; it will spend

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before the Altar a longer or shorter period according to its own pious impulses or the time at its disposal. If you are tempted, go and seek aid from the God of Strength; if you know not how to act or what resolution to take in a trying and difficult case, go and consult the Father of Light; if you are saddened, disturbed, cast down, go and pour out your soul to the God of all Consolation. Stay a quarter of an hour, five minutes, or even less, if you like, and Jesus seeing that you think of Him, that your heart and affections are fixed upon Him, will bless you; the faithful will be edified, and your piety and example will influence the whole parish.

My God, if we were not fascinated by the witchery of this world and enthralled by its seductions, we would have to be taken by force from the foot of the Altar, so great would be its attractions, so entrancing the spell it would cast over our hearts. There prostrate in the Presence of the Lamb, ever immolated and ever living, we would wish through Him and in Him and with Him to offer up ceaselessly to the most Blessed Trinity our adoration and our homage and thus begin here on earth the life of the Blessed in heaven. Our Altars would be the marts of exchange for the commerce which is ever going on between earth and heaven; the priest would be the mediator and bond between the members of Jesus who are still in conflict here on earth and those who are in glory in their eternal home on high.

4. But the chiefest solicitude of a priest, in order to worthily honor Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the

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Altar, will be to lead a blameless, a pure, an innocent life, that thus his heart may be a vessel of honor, a becoming and consecrated dwelling-place into which the Spouse of Virgins, the Lamb without spot may enter and where He will gladly abide. The priest should dread more than death, aye, more than a thousand deaths, the awful crime of a sacrilegious Communion.

The crime of the Jews, who shed the blood of Jesus Christ, makes the heart stand still with horror, but the crime of a priest, who profanes His Body and Blood, is still more ghastly, still more monstrous. The words of St. John Chrysostom on this point are terrifying: "The priest," he says, "who goes up to the Altar with a conscience defiled, does not offer up a sacrifice, he commits a murder; he does not eat the Bread of Life, he swallows poison." Unhappy priest, he eats and drinks, but he eats and drinks his own judgment, his own condemnation. His process is finished; his Judge is within him; his sentence is already pronounced; it is written and stamped on his very soul; he has made it part of himself by eating the Bread which should have given him life and, instead, has smitten him with death.

The good priest, on the contrary, the pious priest, will never think that he can be sufficiently solicitous to avoid even the smallest fault, or that he can be too careful and vigilant in keeping a watch over the least movements of his heart, because the thought is ever before him that he enjoys the inestimable privilege morning by morning of celebrating the Holy Mysteries.

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We require of a simple layman, who goes to Holy Communion only at intervals and whose heart is, as it were, only an inn at which Jesus puts up as one might on a journey, that he shall prepare himself to receive Holy Communion by a contrite confession of all his sins and by acts of faith and love; and should not the same, nay a more careful preparation be required of a priest, who receives our Lord day by day and whose heart is the cherished abiding-place, and the throne-room, so to speak, of the King of Glory?

I am well aware that the Church forbids a layman who has little fervor to go daily to Holy Communion, while she permits a priest in the same condition to celebrate every day. The reason for this discrimination is that a layman, in going to Holy Communion, does so only as a personal matter and for his own good, and need not go except when he feels that it will be for his spiritual advantage to do so; whereas a priest celebrates Mass as an official, for the benefit of others. The glory which such celebration gives to God, and the blessings that accrue from it to the people, largely compensate in the eyes of the Church for the tepidity with which a priest receives Holy Communion, and for the little or no good he derives from It himself.

But if a careless, imperfect priest, while opening to others the fountains of grace, himself neglects to drink of their life-giving waters, will he not receive a terrible rebuke when he stands before the tribunal of the sovereign Judge?

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CHAPTER II.

JESUS CHRIST LEFT THE BLESSED EUCHARIST TO HIS CHURCH TO BE THE FOOD OF THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE. DUTIES OF THE PRIEST AS THE DISPENSER OF THE BREAD OF LIFE.

I.

In the material world physical life has its own proper sustenance. Man's physical life is sustained, preserved and developed by air, water, vegetable and animal food, which he assimilates and transforms into his own substance.

His intellectual life has as its principle a certain participation in generic truths which constitute the basis of human reason. To develop and perfect this life every human being, born into the world, draws from the common store those notions and that knowledge which, in the order of nature, are the heritage of all mankind.

If man were destined only to a natural end, he would find in these two sources of life an abundance to satisfy his desires and fill his aspirations; but the longing for something better, the yearning after the Infinite, which is a torment to him, proves beyond all question that his true end is supernatural, that he has in him a higher

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life which must slake its thirst and satisfy its hunger with something more ennobling than this world can offer, with something purer than the gratification of sense and more elevating than the development of the natural reason.

Man is created for God, and only in God can he find peace and the perfection and completion of his being.

Man in his innocence communicated with God through reason and grace; reason pure and upright rose without effort from the creature to the Creator. The Creator by a loving condescension bowed down to man, and thus became the spring and sustenance of his supernatural life.

The effect of original sin was to totally deprive man of grace and of all supernatural communication with God. In consequence there was in all men an irresistible desire, a universal craving for something outside of themselves, which being unable to satisfy, they lapsed into the most shocking and monstrous errors. These took the form of idolatry in the multitude and of Pantheism among the learned, and both, being ignorant of God, their Saviour, were shipwrecked on the rock of these two master errors.

The purpose of the Redemption, of that great Mission which the only Son of God took upon Himself, was to reestablish the primitive relations between man and God and thus restore to us the principle and sustenance of the supernatural life, which is no other than God Himself.

But how could the Divine Majesty ever again put Himself in communication with men who had fallen

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so low, whom sin had made so feeble and so base? We will let St. Augustine answer.

Respice altitudinem ipsius: In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Ecce cibus sempiternus: sed manducant angeli, manducant supernæ virtutes, manducant cœlestes spiritus, et manducantes saginantur, et integrum manet quod eos satiat et lætificat. Quis autem homo posset ad illum cibum? Unde cor tam idoneum illi cibo? Oportebat ergo ut illa mensa lactesceret, et ad parvulos perveniret. Unde autem fit cibus lac? Unde cibus in lac convertitur, nisi per carnem trajiciatur? Nam mater hoc facit; quod manducat mater, hoc manducat infans. Sed quia minus idoneus est infans, qui pane vescatur, ipsum panem mater incarnat, et per humilitatem mamillæ et lactis succum, de ipso pane pascit infantem. Quomodo ergo de ipso pane pavit nos sapientia Dei? Quia Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis. Videte ergo humilitatem, quia panem angelorum manducat homo; idest Verbum illud quo pascuntur Angeli sempiternum, quod est æquale Patri manducavit homo. . . . Saginantur ergo illo Angeli: sed semetipsum exinanivit ut manducaret panem angelorum homo.[1]

Religion, which is nothing more nor less than the union of man with God, has as its corner-stone the two palmary mysteries of the Incarnation and the Blessed Eucharist. By the Incarnation an intimate union is established between Divinity and humanity. The Son of God takes from humanity a body and soul like unto ours and becomes man without ceasing to be God. It

[1] Enarrat. in Psl. 32.

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is a most signal honor for all generations of men to have one of their number raised to so surpassing a dignity as that of being hypostatically united with one of the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. When a king betroths the daughter of one of his subjects her entire family is thereby ennobled; the brothers of the queen become the brothers of the king, still without sharing the power and the prerogatives of their sister.

The Son of God, however, wished to dignify and ennoble not one individual only, but every member of the human family. This He does through the Blessed Eucharist, which, as the Fathers teach, is the complement of the Incarnation, its continuation and extension. In the Incarnation He assumed only one body of flesh; in the Blessed Eucharist He makes His own the bodies and souls of as many as receive Him. These two mysteries are the extremes of Christianity; they are so bound up one with the other that each is the strength and perfection of each, and either would be useless without the other.

And here let us note in passing an analogy between the priest and the August Mother of the Word Incarnate. Without Mary we should not have a Saviour, without the priest, who daily at the Altar reproduces and distributes the Flesh of God-made-Man, we should not be able to unite ourselves with Him and draw from Him a new and divine life: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.*[1]

[1] There are thousands of volumes written on the Blessed Virgin, but I do not know of one written with special reference to priests treating

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The Lord said by the Prophet: *I Myself will take of the marrow of the high cedar and will set it: I will crop off a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent . . . and it shall shoot forth into branches, and it shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar.*[1]

This Great Cedar, planted in the bosom of humanity by the Heavenly Father, is Jesus Christ. The branches are all Christians who, in order to have life, must nourish themselves with the sap of the tree. This is what our Lord said to St. Augustine: *Cibus sum grandium; cresce et manducabis me; nec ego mutabor in te, sed tu mutaberis in me.* In Holy Communion Jesus Christ is not changed into us, but we are changed into Jesus Christ. It is a natural law that in the taking of food the inferior is assimilated by the superior, the lower by the higher, because in creation all things tend upward towards a higher and a more perfect life.

Jesus Christ gives us in very truth in the Eucharist, which is the fruit of a blessing, what Satan falsely

fully of their relations to the most Blessed Virgin, the Cooperatrix of the Redemption, the Treasure-house of grace, the Advocate of Sinners and the Mediatrix of men with the Divine Mediator. The Blessed Eucharist Itself, which has been to Catholic writers the inspiration of so many beautiful and sublime passages, has never yet been treated in a way to draw out this analogy, so necessary and so natural to souls who aspire after the Infinite and who begin at the Eucharistic Table that Divine life which will end only in heaven, where it will find its completion. How many beauties there are still in religion ready to be revealed to those who seek them with the eye of faith! Those who study these adorable mysteries with faith and love, and enter into their depth of meaning, will see them, dimly it may be and from afar, and will yearn to be set free, that they may contemplate them in the light of the Divine Presence.

[1] Ezech. xvii. 22, 23.

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promised our First Parents, when he gave them fruit on which lay a curse. This is an observation of the Abbot Rupert, who says: *Hic præcipue divinitatem pollicetur carnem suam manducantibus, et illusionem nequissimi nebulonis qui dixit: Comeditis et eritis sicut dii, serio loquens in verum effectum convertit.*

Satan said: *Eat of this fruit and you shall be as gods.*[1] A deplorable experience has taught us how deceptive was this impious promise. Jesus Christ says to us: Eat of My Flesh, the delicious fruit which grew and was matured in the spotless womb of the Virgin, that garden of delights, fragrant with the perfume of every virtue. If you eat of it, I promise you that, in very truth, you shall abide in Me, be changed and transformed into Me; you shall be as Gods, whose greatness, begun here on earth, will be perfected in heaven.

After her death, St. Teresa, radiant with light and transcendent beauty, appeared to a devout lady who had been her friend, and said to her: We are in heaven, you are on earth; we should both be united in love and purity, we in our heavenly home contemplating face to face the Divine Majesty, you in your exile receiving Him and adoring Him, hidden under the Eucharistic veil.

A priest as the dispenser of the Bread of Life has two duties: 1st, to frequently remind the people of Its indispensable necessity; 2d, to distribute It with caution and discretion.

1st. Necessity of the Blessed Eucharist.

[1] Gen. iii. 5.

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Our intellect was obscured and distorted by original sin; it was rectified and illuminated by the teaching of the Man-God, from whom we learn whence we came and whither we are going. But to see the goal from afar and not be able to reach it would be but poor comfort. The heart is the weakest, the most enfeebled part of man, and this is so because it is agitated and swept by turbulent passions. The heart abases itself and gives itself up to creatures by seeking in them vile gratifications and fleeting pleasures. To lift it from the earth, to give it strength and generosity, grace and the breath of the supernatural life are necessary.

This grace, by which we are born again into a new life, is in the Heart of Jesus; this is its spring and source, and if we would have it we must seek it there. But how? Through the Sacraments, which are so many streams flowing out from the source of life and conveying to our souls the living waters which strengthen the heart and make it capable of great and robust virtue. Of these Sacraments the most marvellous is of course the Blessed Eucharist, because It is the very source of all grace.

But when the intellect is illuminated and the heart healed, will the restoration of man be complete? No, because the body, which is an integral part of man and a sharer in the eternal destinies of the soul, must also be restored to health.

And we cannot but admire how perfectly fitting and appropriate are the means employed to rehabilitate it. When man ate the forbidden fruit the poison of the serpent entered into his blood, bringing with it

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disease and death. Hence in order to regain life and vigor, in order to purify his senses and cleanse his whole being, it was necessary that man should eat of the bread that came down from heaven, and thus sow in his body the seed of immortality, which should be to him as the embers buried in the ashes, a spark that would burst into flame and life.

Qui pereuntem hominem vetiti dulcedine pomi
Instauras meliore cibu, potuque sacrati
Sanguinis infusum depellis ab angue venenum.[1]

Whosoever shall refuse to eat of this heavenly food shall not live, that is, he shall not have within him the principle of that supernatural and divine life which the Son of God gave to fallen man: *Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye shall not have life in you.*[2] On the contrary, whosoever shall worthily eat of this most Holy Flesh shall have life within him. In Holy Communion the Man-God communicates to us His life, He transforms us into Himself, transfusing, if I may so say, our body, our soul and our whole being into His Divine Being: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him.*[3]

2d. The duty of distributing this Divine Food with discretion.

That it was the intention of our Saviour that the faithful should frequently partake of the Blessed Eucharist is clear from the fact that He gave us His Body and His Blood under the form of bread and wine,

[1] Sedulius. [2] John vi. 54. [3] Ibid. 57.

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these being the ordinary means of sustaining life and the types of all food. The early Christians went to Holy Communion daily. The Church could not hesitate to admit to the divine banquet those fervid Christians who were ever ready to shed their blood for the name of Jesus Christ. But in our day those who are worthy of so great a privilege are indeed few. Weakened and enfeebled stomachs cannot safely partake of strong and rich food. If such are not cautious both as to the amount and kind of food they take, they will be injured rather than benefited.

What rule, then, should a director of souls follow with regard to what is called frequent Communion, that is, Communion often, or at least once, in the week? We hold that frequent Communion may and should be allowed to two classes of persons: first, to those who are perfect; and, next, to those who are earnestly striving to become perfect; to the first, because they have a right to it; to the second, because they have need of it.

There are souls, dead to the world and to self, who live only for God, standing firm and steadfast in the midst of the temptations and trials that encompass them. By frequent Communion they have been raised to this height of sanctity, and by frequent Communion they are maintained there. These generous souls are tenderly loved by our Lord, and He is pleased to see them daily at His Divine Banquet.

There are others who have not yet reached so great a height of perfection, but who are aspiring to it; who are courageously and laboriously climbing the steep

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and narrow way that leads onward and upward. They stumble at times, they fall short of their good purposes, they commit small offences inseparable from weak human nature, but in these their heart and their will have no part. Such souls have need of frequent Communion to keep the sacred flame alive within them and to strengthen them to push bravely forward to success in the difficult task to which they have put their hands and on which they have set their hearts.

Should the same favor be granted to those who are known under the generic name of devout? No, there are many of these whose piety is such only in appearance, and whose virtue is not solid and real. The least trial, the slightest mortification disturbs and angers them; they are or seem to be more interested in their confessor than in their God; their devotion is a sort of sensuous spirituality; they long for Thabor, but they shrink from Calvary. To allow such as these to go daily or nearly every day to Holy Communion is certainly an abuse; they are fed but they are not nourished. What means will the confessor have to encourage them to make progress if he grants them, simply because they desire it, what should be the reward of generous and earnest effort?

As for others, a director should encourage them to go often when he knows they sincerely love the Blessed Eucharist and go to Holy Communion with the earnest purpose of profiting by It. This is the wish of the Church and the desire of our Divine Master, who has given us the Holy Eucharist to be the food and life of our souls.

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O ye priests, who dispense the Bread of Life and the Chalice of salvation, go forth into the streets, into the highways and public squares, and invite all to the Divine Banquet. Say to them: Come, ye poor wayfarers, thirsty and tired, worn and exhausted from wandering in the desert of this life, come and rest, eat and drink and be refreshed. Come all, for here no one is shut out. At this Table the lowly may sit beside the mighty, the poor beside the rich. There is only one condition, and that is that the will be upright and the heart pure, and in the measure in which your desires are holy, loving and ardent will you receive of this grace and be strengthened and refreshed: *If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*[1]

[1] John vii. 38.

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Section Second.

The Way in which Jesus Christ Sanctifies Souls in the Blessed Eucharist Teaches Priests to Sanctify Themselves by Toiling for the Salvation of Others.

The following are three degrees of perfection which our Saviour in the Blessed Eucharist teaches priests and of which He is there the pattern.

1. Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is as one mystically dead, thus teaching priests to die to themselves and to all the solicitations of nature; this is the mortification of a Christian.

2. Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist lives a mysterious and divine life, thus revealing to priests the perfect pattern of the supernatural life; this is the life of a priest.

3. Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist vivifies and gives life to souls, thus teaching priests how to sanctify the people; this is the life of an Apostle. Let us draw out these thoughts.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTICAL LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST THE PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN MORTIFICATION.

THE Blessed Eucharist, being the memorial of the Passion of Our Saviour, is admirably adapted to teach us the necessity of Christian mortification, to give us a taste for it and make it attractive to us.

The Man-God practised this mortification daily during the years of His life on earth. He was born in

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an abandoned stable, He lived unknown and in the midst of privations, He died encompassed by suffering and reproach, and the sum of His doctrine was the knowledge of the Cross.

His preaching was a continuous exhortation to detachment, self-denial and renunciation. I will venture to say that now, after nineteen centuries, He preaches these virtues to us with a still more constraining eloquence in the Sacrament of the Altar. A Prisoner, as it were, and in chains in our Tabernacles, continuously exposed to outrage and insult, He cries to us from His solitude and loneliness: *If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself.*[1]

If you live according to the flesh, you shall die.[2] What is meant by living according to the flesh? St. Prosper tells us that to live according to the flesh is to seek our own satisfaction and natural gratification in everything we do: *Ille secundum hominem vivit, qui secundum seipsum vivit, qui pergit quo vult, dormit quando et quomodo vult, loquitur quæ et quod vult et quantum vult; videt et lætatur inter quos vult; postremo quidquid naribus suave est, quidquid tractare blandum, quidquid oculis delectabile, quidquid sensibus exteris carnis suæ jucundum, exercet ac sequitur qualiter vult, quia omnia illicita atque licita carnaliter vult.*[3]

A priest should bear in mind that he is like other men, a son of Adam, and bears about within him the embers of concupiscence, a weak will and flesh that is frail. To hope to abide in grace and acquire solid

[1] Matt. xvi. 24. [2] Rom. viii. 13.
[3] De Vita Contempl. Lib. III. 1.

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virtue without practising mortification is a grave error and a stupid delusion. The Doctors in their teachings and the Saints by their example are unanimous in saying: *Tantum proficies quantum tibi vim intuleris.*[1]

But what sort of mortification is demanded? Mortification from within and from without. Interior mortification is certainly the more perfect, but the two go together, one cannot be severed from the other. You will hear people, who are devout in a smug, self-satisfied sort of way, say that they possess many rare and beautiful things, but that they are not attached to them; that they enjoy eating a good dinner, but that they abhor sensuality; that they allow their senses the innocent gratifications that come in their way, but that in so doing their object is to give praise to God whose bounty has made life so pleasant and so delightful.

An admirable sort of perfection, certainly! But it requires veritable heroes to practise it, for only heroes can, amid such surroundings, keep the devil chained and under their feet. And before the victory is gained, if it ever is gained, how many conflicts must precede and how many defeats!

Do not allow yourself to fancy you have ever reached a height so dizzy and dangerous. You are not an Angel, the old man is still living within you. You will scarcely have rooted out an inordinate affection, when you will find it springing up again; or, what is equally as bad, another one, and possibly a worse, will take its place. Hence the knife of mortification must be always in your hand. This means that the body

[1] De Imit. Chr. I. 25.

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must be brought into subjection by penance, that thus the heart may be cleansed; that the members must be weakened and their solicitations stifled, that thus the soul may be chastened and beautified. There is no other way of expiating the lawless pleasures of the flesh save by the penitential severity of the Cross. St. Cesarius of Arles says: *Sanctæ afflictiones humiliata corpora macerant, sed immaculata corda purificant; membris subtrahunt fortitudinem, sed conscientiis addunt nitorem. Per duræ crucis exercitia, decepta dudum carnis gaudia puniuntur, ac sic mortificatione præsenti futura mortis sententia prævenitur, et dum culpæ auctor humiliatur, culpa consumitur, dumque exterior afflictio voluntariæ districtionis infertur, tremendi judicii offensa sedatur, et ingentia debita solvit labor exiguus, quæ consumpturus erat ardor æternus.*[1]

But, it will be said, we must not enfeeble our strength, we must not expose ourselves to the danger of ruining our health. Yes, certainly, be prudent and discreet, but in a matter of such delicacy, where everything conspires to deceive you, do not seek counsel from your enemy, do not listen to the suggestions of the tempter. Hugh of St. Victor says: *Ecce diabolus physicam docet, ecce medicus factus est, de complexionibus loquitur, infirmitates diversas, si teneatur religio, generari prædicat. Sed quare hoc? Non ut mederi velit, sed ut occidere possit; non ut ægritudines curet, sed ut securius mortem inferat. Videt ex subtractione ciborum luxuriæ vires posse minui, et ideo non tardat minari infirmitates.*[2]

[1] Homil. I. Quadrag. [2] De Claust Anim. L. I. C. 2.

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However, the mortifications which we impose upon ourselves, as well as those which God sends us, should serve to subjugate the spirit, rather than the flesh; the passions, rather than the body. For if a victory over both is necessary, the victory over the spirit is necessary at all times and for all, whereas the victory over the flesh may come later, to each according to his disposition. What will it avail to weaken the body by fasting and to lash it with the scourge if the spirit is stubborn and the will rebellious? What is the good of humbling yourself before God in secret if you cannot bear the slightest mortification in public? if you love to be admired and praised? if you are a slave to the opinions of men? The Church does not want in Her army soldiers who are so cowardly that they fear human respect and are ruled by it. Our Saviour loved His Cross and bore it, not alone at Nazareth and under the eye of His Mother, but also through the streets of Jerusalem and out beyond its gates before all the multitude that had gathered there.

According to the Fathers every Christian must be a fearless follower of the Cross and bear this standard on high before the world. Whoso loves not Jesus Crucified is anathema, and whoso shrinks abashed at the humiliations of the Cross is not of Jesus; he must seek another leader. The leader of all holy priests is Jesus poor and humble and suffering.

The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world,[1] says St. Paul. In these words the great Apostle lays bare the wonderful secrets of his heart, and reveals the

[1] Galat. vi. 14.

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source whence, during the long and harassing struggle of his apostolate, he sought strength and victory. He was enabled to endure labors so incredible, to run a course so glorious and to save innumerable souls by dying to the world, to himself, to his inclinations, to his desires, and to everything that is not God. And what he did has been done in every age since by those apostolic men and great Saints who have labored so earnestly and so successfully in extending the Kingdom of God.

But it is at the foot of the Altar especially that the priest should profoundly meditate upon and make his own the words which Christ first exemplified in His Passion, and which He still exemplifies day by day in the Sacrament of His Love: *Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.*[1] When a pious and zealous priest by long and unwearied mortification has grown completely dead to himself, then will he bring forth much fruit; then will he begin to live the life which Jesus Christ lives on our Altars. This is called the life of the Priest.

[1] John xii. 24.

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CHAPTER II.

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST IN OUR TABERNACLES.

WHAT is the life of Jesus Christ in our Tabernacles? In its motive and end it is that which He lived during the days of His sojourn on earth.

The hypostatic union of the Word with our humanity formed that wonderful composite being which we call Jesus Christ, or the Man-God. His life was theandric, that is, it was divinely human and humanly divine. The humanity was not absorbed, but lifted up, exalted, perfected and ennobled by the Divinity.

Jesus Christ desires to reproduce or rather to continue in the midst of His people, but above and beyond all in His priests, the life of His Holy Humanity by means of the Blessed Eucharist: *As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.*[1]

Let us try to bring this doctrine home to ourselves. Jesus Christ in our Tabernacles is the Head of the Church of which we are the members. Now, as the Council of Trent, following the doctrine of St. Paul, teaches, there descends from this Divine Head a continuous shower of grace, a supernatural influence which anticipates all our good works, accompanies and per-

[1] John vi. 58.

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fects them, and without which they would not be pleasing to God or capable of meriting an eternal reward.

Hence, since we are members of Jesus Christ and receive of the influence of His spirit, we should live His life. This is a necessary consequence of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist. Jesus Christ should be the life of our souls. Our every thought and word and deed should be His work. If we speak, we should speak in and by Him: *Si quis loquitur, quasi sermones Dei.* If we toil, we should toil as dependent upon His Spirit and conformably to the impulse He imparts. In a word, we should surrender ourselves to be led in all things by Him, and by Him alone, to do and to act at the time and in the manner most pleasing to Him, according to His good pleasure and for His glory.

Doing this the priest will exactly fulfil the warning given him by the bishop on the day of his ordination: *Imitamini quod tractatis.* The whole tenor of his life will bear upon it the impress of three characteristics of the life of our Saviour in the Sacrament of the Altar.

First Characteristic: The life of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar is an interior and retired life. He is exposed to the public, He receives and converses with people of every sort, but yet He remains hidden, sheltered and absorbed in the bosom of His Father: *Deus absconditus.*

Similarly, a priest when he goes down among men should be as a ray of sunshine which is never detached from its source. In the discharge of all his functions he should keep himself united with God, and from this close and familiar association with the sanctity of God

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he will receive that light, strength and unction which will render his ministry fruitful with the people.

Second Characteristic: The life of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is a life infinitely pure and holy, and this in spite of the fact that He abides in the midst of sinners and is continuously dealing with them.

So also should be the life of a priest. He should not be like water which loses its purity by being used for washing, or like the taper that is consumed in lighting the House of God. He should surrender himself to Jesus Christ, so that Jesus Christ may live in him. He will thus become as a lily among thorns, or as a ray of light which falls upon and illuminates things unclean without losing its purity or its radiance.

Third Characteristic: The life of Jesus Christ on the Altar is a life of supreme elevation, of supremely interior perfection, while in external appearance it is a life of the utmost simplicity; for what could be more simple or more common than the Sacramental Species by which He is veiled?

The same may be said of the priest who worthily receives the Bread of Life. He is reminded that the glory of the ministry of the Altar does not consist in a display of natural talents, nor in the success of great enterprises, nor in the praise or applause of men; but that what dignifies him and makes him great in the eyes of God is his spirit of faith and piety, which, fed and sustained by grace from on high, replaces the weakness of man with the strength of God.

Now if you take a look at yourself, if you place yourself side by side with your Divine Model, what a

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subject you will have for meditation, how humbled you will be and how abashed! You call yourself a man of God, and your will, everything about you is wholly at variance with the divine will. You wear the garb of the Saints and of the perfect, and you have all the imperfections and, it may be, the weaknesses of sinners. You should seek only the glory of God, and instead you seek yourself and your own glory. You are bound by the duty of your ministry and office to give yourself wholly to the work of converting the world, while on the contrary the world is perverting you. You are sent to root out and destroy sin in others, and instead you yourself become a slave of sin. Morning by morning at the Altar you fill your bosom with fire, and your heart is cold; you drink honey and you taste not its sweetness.

O my Saviour, grant that there may be an end to contradictions so incongruous; permit not that men who in the morning feed upon the Bread of Angels shall during all the rest of the day have no relish for aught except for what is vulgar and earthly. Grant that priests who have become one with Thee in Holy Communion may partake of Thy spirit and of the interior impulses of Thy adorable Heart, that thus living Thy life they may be able to transmit that life to others.

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CHAPTER III.

IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST JESUS CHRIST GIVES LIFE TO SOULS AND IS THE PATTERN OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE.

JESUS CHRIST in the Sacrament of the Altar endues souls with life because He is the Source of all grace and the invisible Head and soul of the Universal Church. The priest is the visible instrument or agency of the invisible workings of our Saviour. He should work as Jesus Christ works, he should work with Him and in absolute dependence upon His spirit.

1st. Jesus Christ abides in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar as the Source of all grace.

St. Paul says that Jesus Christ is the Head of the body of the Church, and that in consequence it is the wish of His Eternal Father that He should be filled to overflowing with the graces and wealth of heaven, that through Him these may be poured out on all Christians who are members of the Church: *He is the Head of the body, the Church. In Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell.* And again: *In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead corporally, and you are filled in Him, who is the Head.*[1] The Divinity with the fulness of its essence, with its perfec-

[1] Coloss. i. 18; ii 19.

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tions and its virtues, with all its wealth and treasure abides really and truly in Jesus Christ, and these He communicates to us; He fills us with them in the measure in which we are His members, because these graces are His not for His own sake alone but for ours also.

Conformably with the doctrine of St. Paul, St. Thomas teaches that all graces are in Jesus Christ, not as they might be in a private individual, but as in the Head of the Church, to whom all the faithful are united, as the members of a body are united to its head. Hence as the head distributes the current of life through all parts of the body, so does Jesus Christ, abiding in the Sacrament of the Altar, distribute His gifts and His graces through all the members of His mystical body —the Church.

It is of this fulness that the faithful participate, and it is this participation that makes them humble, obedient, patient and chaste or eminent in any other virtue.

Jesus Christ is indeed the one and only source of grace, but priests are the necessary channels by which it comes to us. And how? St. Paul makes this marvel clear to us. According to him there is an analogy between what goes on in the mystical body of the Church and in our natural bodies. In our bodies life is diffused through all the members by means of veins, nerves, ligaments and natural junctures. So also in the Church there are channels connecting with and secured to the Divine fountain-head. These channels are the bishops and priests according to the hierarchical order established by God.

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How supremely necessary it is, then, to cleanse ourselves from all the filth of earth to the end that the waters of grace may not be polluted in passing through us, and that they may be transmitted through us to others as pure, limpid and sweet as they are when they come from their fountain-head.

2d. Jesus Christ gives life in the Blessed Eucharist, not alone as the principle and source of grace, but also as the universal soul of the Church, whose actions He directs and whose members He governs.

Here we shall try to follow step by step the teaching of the Doctor of the Gentiles. According to St. Paul Christians are the fulness of Jesus Christ. It is indeed true that our divine Saviour is perfect and complete in His own Person, but nevertheless He receives a certain amplitude from His members. The human soul, for instance, is complete in itself from the very first instant of its creation, and yet it seems to grow and expand in a child from its capacity to give to the child a fuller life, communicating to the child, as the child waxes strong, a greater power of movement, of sensation and reason. Similarly Jesus Christ, though perfect and complete in Himself, seems to extend and amplify Himself in us in exercising through us His capacity to love, to humble Himself, to suffer and to practise other virtues.

Let us throw a fuller light on this high and divine theology.

While all the gifts of grace, all strength and virtue were gathered together and centred in the Man-God during His sojourn on earth, nevertheless it was not possible for Him alone to put into execution all the

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great and sublime designs which His Divine soul had conceived. The limitations of His natural body did not permit this. Hence it was in a sense necessary that God should give Him a *second* body, which should be diffused throughout the whole earth, which should endure for time and eternity, that through this body He might be able to satisfy His zeal and His infinite longing to give glory to His Father.

His own voice could not reach all men and carry to them the words of eternal life, but this He could do through His Apostles, and this He will continue to do through their successors to the end of time. As St. Paul says, it is Christ who speaks, and Christ who exhorts through their voice; their words are but the echo of His, they are but His ministers and His interpreters: *God, as it were, exhorting by us.*[1]

Again, Jesus Christ would have wished to have endured a thousand torments, to have suffered a thousand deaths in order to adequately satisfy His Father's justice, and fittingly honor His holiness. This He could not do Himself. He could die only once on the Cross. But what He could not do Himself He has done through a countless multitude of martyrs and afflicted souls in whom, as in His own members, He amplifies His sufferings, prolongs their duration, multiplies them, renews them, and will go on renewing them until the day of His second coming.

This explains the enduring and generous constancy, the heroic courage of the innumerable martyrs of faith and penance whose deeds seem to us to be beyond the

[1] II. Cor. v. 20.

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utmost power of nature. And so they were, but Jesus Christ wrought in those martyr-heroes and bore them on to heights so sublime.

Picture to yourself for a moment those unconquerable athletes of Christianity. They are dragged before tribunals, cast as food to wild beasts, stretched over burning coals; flames consume them, their members are rent asunder with hooks of iron, their flesh is torn into bits and falls from their bodies in shreds. The very thought of all this appals you, and you fear, while contemplating it in fancy, that their constancy will give way under such terrible strain and suffering. No, no; fear not; have no such thought: those valiant souls know well that Jesus Christ suffers in them and with them; they see Him, they are conscious of His presence in the depths of their souls. Nothing frightens them; they know not fear; they jeer at their sufferings; they smile in the midst of their torments. Their bodies are torn and maimed, the steel furrows and lays open the flesh of their limbs, and still they bless God, thank their executioners and sing canticles of joy. Does nature give such courage to tender children and timid virgins? No, Jesus Christ lives in these martyrs, suffers with them and fills them with His own divine strength and endurance.

This is not rhetoric or a flight of the imagination, it is the teaching of St. Paul, who says of himself, in enumerating his sufferings, that he supplied in his own flesh what was wanting to the Passion of Jesus Christ. And what, O great Apostle, was wanting to the Passion of my Adorable Saviour? The meaning is that the

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Passion of the Son of God could not satisfy the immense desire He had of immolating Himself thousands and thousands of times for the glory of His Father, and He therefore committed to His disciples the task of satisfying this insatiable longing to suffer and to be annihilated.

By such words St. Paul gives us to understand that the body of the Church is constantly striving to realize and reproduce the thoughts and wishes of Her Head and Divine Spouse.

Hence the observation which St. Augustine frequently makes when he comes upon those holy ejaculations of fervid piety which occur in the Psalms: It is the unity of Jesus Christ which speaks; it is Jesus Christ who cries out to heaven, who laments and mourns and does penance. Hence, too, the profound thought of St. Cyprian when he represents the Son of God as doing battle against tyrants and as suffering in His martyrs, and when he ascribes to this glorious and impassible Head of the Church the ignominy and death of His members. Hence, also, the general statement of Origen that all the works of piety done by the Saints are the works of Jesus Christ and were by Him wrought in them. Our Saviour from His throne in the Tabernacle extends His activity in every direction; His Sacrament, placed in the midst of the Church, is to Her what the soul is to the body. The Church being a body, and a living body, must necessarily have a soul to impart to her that life which energizes her, and this soul is none other than Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Jesus Christ: *Non potest vivere corpus Christi, nisi*

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de Spiritu Christi, says St. Augustine. From all this, dear priests, we may draw some strikingly practical lessons for ourselves.

Properly speaking there is only One Priest in this world, and He is Jesus Christ. He is in all priests; He immolates Himself again and again, day by day, as often as the adorable sacrifice is offered up by them on the Altar. There is only one shepherd, one guide of souls in all the Church, and this shepherd is ever and always Jesus Christ. He wishes alone to shepherd all souls, but by and through the agency of His priests; He wishes to abide in all pastors and in all guides of souls, directing the souls confided to them. Whether it is Peter who is the shepherd, or Paul, or another, if the souls are guided aright in the paths of holiness, it is always Jesus Christ who watches over them and directs them.

Hence in discharging the various functions of his ministry the priest should look upon himself as an instrument and agent of Jesus Christ, who, no longer wishing visibly to direct Christians as once He directed the Apostles, does so invisibly through the ministry of His priests.

Therefore, Brother Priests, we should be continually united with Jesus Christ and responsive to His will, in order thus to perfectly carry out His purpose and fulfil His designs upon the souls committed to us.

Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and Guide of the Universal Church; we are but His instruments; therefore in directing souls we should endeavor to be responsive to His impulse and inspiration. Jesus Christ is the

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source whence come all the graces that enrich the Church; we are but the channels through which they flow; hence at this source we must seek the graces which we transmit to the faithful. Jesus Christ is the voice, we are but the echo; therefore we must speak as He spoke, and utter nothing that He has not said.

All this proves that a recollected and interior life is absolutely necessary for a priest. If we live a life of dissipation, the spirit of Jesus Christ will not abide in us; and if it does not, we cannot communicate His spirit to others. We shall be like mothers with withered breasts who, unable to give suck to their babes, leave them to perish of hunger.

If, on the contrary, we visit our Lord frequently, adoring Him in secret at the foot of the Altar, we shall there drink from the fountain of life, we shall be like those great basins which, fed from perennial springs, are ever dispensing their waters and yet are never exhausted; or like those rivers into which flow multitudinous streams and rivulets which, while they diffuse their waters over the adjacent fields, enriching them with alluvial soil, themselves never go dry.

Let us sum up in a few words the doctrine we have been developing. The Son of God has made an everlasting covenant with His Spouse, the Church; He will abide with Her to the end of time, hidden under the Eucharistic veil. There He is the source of divine life, a vessel that is ever filled, or rather a boundless ocean from which we receive all graces and all means of sanctification.

There He lives, there He perpetuates His mysteries,

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there He exercises all the offices which He exercised during His mortal life on earth. But all this goes on within the Tabernacle and is invisible to men.

To make this hidden and mysterious life sensible, so that it may be seen by all, Jesus Christ has chosen priests to be His representatives and to impersonate Him. They discharge in His name, for Him and together with Him, the office of mediators, of dispensers of His grace and savers of souls. Nor is this all. To entirely fulfil their mission they must present in their persons a visible image of the life and the invisible virtues of the Man-God. In this way especially will they fulfil their duty towards their Saviour, who has raised them to a dignity so exalted and enriched them with privileges so magnificent.

The Emperor Gratian used to say that he would gladly melt and distil his crown, his sceptre, his body, his soul and his whole being if he could possibly extract from them a single sentiment of love or a single degree of honor to augment the glory of Jesus Christ. He had a holy envy of even the food with which the Son of God was nourished during His pilgrimage on earth, because this, by being destroyed and transfused into His substance, sustained the life of a God.

These were noble and generous desires, no doubt, but impossible to realize.

Here, however, is a desire which may be easily realized and which is also most acceptable to God. Do not long to convert your substance into that of Jesus Christ and to make it His nourishment, but rather strive with all your might by living a truly priestly and

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holy life to transform your very self into His likeness, so that all may recognize in you a true image of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, so that you may be able to say with the great Apostle: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me. Amen, amen.*[1]

[1] Galat. ii. 20.

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Section Third.

Jesus Christ, Daily Immolated on the Altar by the Hands of the Priest, Teaches Pastors of Souls the Spirit of Sacrifice and Immolation They should have in Discharging the Functions of Their Ministry.

THE sacrifice of the Mass is the great act, the act by excellence of the life of the priest: *Every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for man in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.*[1]

What lessons Jesus Christ gives to all men, and above all to priests in the sacrifice of the Mass!

(1) Jesus Christ, immolating Himself on the Altar to the glory of His Father, teaches His priests how they should dedicate themselves to the service of the Divine Majesty.

(2) Jesus Christ, making Himself on the Altar a sacrifice of thanksgiving, teaches His priests the best means by which to discharge their own debts to the Divine Goodness and those of the human race.

(3) Jesus Christ, a victim of propitiation on the Altar, teaches His priests the length to which they should carry their zeal and sacrifice for the salvation of their brethren.

(4) Jesus Christ, the fountain of grace on the Altar, teaches His priests how they should fulfil their sublime office of mediators and dispensers of heavenly gifts.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS CHRIST, IMMOLATING HIMSELF ON THE ALTAR TO THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER, TEACHES HIS PRIESTS HOW THEY SHOULD DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE SERVICE OF THE DIVINE MAJESTY.

A BEING infinitely perfect can have nothing superior to himself, and therefore he must be himself the ulti-

[1] Heb. v. 1.

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mate end of all his works. For this reason St. Maximus says that God exercises towards His own adorable Being a sort of religious cult or worship, and that this universe is as a temple built by Him in honor of His Divinity. Day by day and throughout all the hours of the day there are gathered in this temple songsters and musicians divided into choirs and arranged in concert, who are wholly and ceaselessly engaged in narrating and singing the praises and the wonders of His power and goodness.

These singers are Angels and men, the animals, the heavens and the stars, all creatures visible and invisible: *The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of His hand.*[1]

But what are all the homages of creatures and their voices of praise as compared with the honor due the infinite majesty of God? Vain were it for men to burn incense and pour out the blood of victims; all the cedars of Libanus, says the Prophet Isaias, were not sufficient to kindle the fire on the Altar of the Lord. Even if all animals were offered a sacrifice in this temple, the holocaust would not be worthy of His greatness. Vain were it for Angels to unite with men in telling His praises; in vain would all the creatures of earth and heaven be immolated at the foot of His throne; all that is limited and finite is as nothing in the presence of the Infinite. God cannot be worthily honored save by His Word, by His only Son, because this Divine Word, being equal in all things to His

[1] Psal. xviii. 7.

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Father, is a manifestation and revelation, a praise infinite and worthy of Him.

For this reason the Omnipotent God never considered that He had been worthily honored on this earth until the uncreated Word had come down from high heaven, had made His entrance into the world and had in the guise of a slave presented Himself as the worshipper of the Most High and the restorer of His glory. Then God said to Him: *Thou art My Son, the Figure of My substance, this day have I begotten Thee*,[1] by Thee alone am I glorified as becomes My greatness.

Now, this sublime act of religion it is which we discharge daily in the Holy Mass. I see an Altar, and on it is placed a bit of bread with a little wine. Ye faithful, lift up your hearts; earth, be silent, because a marvellous prodigy is about to be wrought by the voice of the priest.

A word is spoken, the selfsame word that created earth and heaven, and which is all-powerful to accomplish what it will. This word, first spoken by the Son of God, is as efficacious now, uttered by the mouth of the priest, His minister, as it was then.

What a marvel has been wrought on this mystical table! Where is now the bread? where the wine? These no longer exist; an invisible fire has come down from heaven, touched and changed their substance, and it is replaced by the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By virtue of this Omnipotent Word the Incarnate God is born again upon the Altar; the word of the priest has given Him a new life, a new existence,

[1] Acts xiii. 33.

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and behold, there He is before us in the form of a victim.

As such He is wholly ours, our wealth, our possession, and we can offer Him to His Heavenly Father. Great God, accept this offering. This offering which we now sacrifice to Thy Supreme Majesty is no longer, as in the Old Law, a lamb or a victim of small price. The gift which we offer in Thy honor is One who is Thy equal. Look down upon this Altar; we there offer Thee Thy Christ, Thy Beloved Son: *Look upon the face of Thy Christ.*[1]

So amazing, so prodigious is the power granted to a poor mortal! Heaven opens at his beck, and at his bidding the God of glory comes down to earth.

Angels of Heaven, who contemplate face to face the Most High, your prerogatives are indeed divine, but they are inferior to those of the priest. Ye are beyond him in nature, but he excels you in the dignity of his functions. Your power is indeed great, but his is without bound or limit. Ye bear up the world, as Job says, and, bending your wings under the feet of the God of Majesty, serve as His throne, but the priest brings Him down from heaven to earth, and bears Him about at will in his hands.

Nor is this all. In celebrating the divine mysteries we raise ourselves to a state still more sublime. On our Altars we render the Adorable Trinity the same honor which Jesus Christ rendered on the Cross; in our adoration we rise to the same prodigious and sublime height to which He rose by His death.

[1] Psal. lxxxiii. 10.

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What end did the Divine Word have in view in becoming man? Was the saving of mankind His one and only purpose? If this were the only end which He proposed to Himself in His incarnation, one solitary drop of His blood, one solitary tear, nay, one solitary word of the Incarnate God would have been more than sufficient to have redeemed a thousand worlds without taking upon Him in addition the wretchedness of the manger, the desolation and dereliction of Gethsemani, the shame of Calvary and the great scandal of the Cross.

But the thoughts of my Saviour went beyond this, they had a higher purpose. Men, because they shared the rebellion of their First Parents, had dishonored the Supreme Majesty; the Son of God wished to make reparation to His glory by giving Him an honor such that He could not receive a greater. And to do this, what was necessary?

Contemplate the perfect Adorer of His Father. From the bosom of the Eternal He comes down and takes up His abode in the womb of a virgin and becomes Flesh: *And the Word was made flesh.*[1] This is His first step, but He will not stop here. O Son of the Most High, abase Thyself, abase Thyself still more.

From the chaste womb of Mary He descends into the manger: *And you shall find the Infant laid in a manger.*[2] This is His second step, His second act of adoration.

Is not this enough? No, no, O my Saviour, go

[1] John i. 14. [2] Luke ii. 12.

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down, go down to still a lower depth. The God of Infinite Majesty requires something more. Perfect adoration consists in immolation, the victim must be wholly consumed.

Jesus will then make a third step. Follow Him up the heights of Calvary; behold Him hanging on the Cross. His body is bloodless, His soul is steeped in an ocean of bitterness, He expires crying out: *It is consummated*, protesting by this complete immolation of Himself that God is so great that all creatures and even the Man-God must, if we may so say, destroy themselves, disappear and annihilate themselves in the presence of His incomprehensible majesty. A God annihilated to exalt a God. What a glorious homage! Only such is worthy of God.

And whatever is grand or august or divine in the sacrifice of the Cross, precisely the same is found in the Sacrifice of our Altars, with one exception, which should be carefully noted. In the Sacrifice of the Mass we offer in reality the same Victim which was immolated on the Cross, and, wonderful to say, we offer It to the Eternal Father, not only in the state which is most acceptable to His justice, but also, and this was not so on Calvary, in the state which is most grateful to His love.

When, in virtue of the mystic words, the Saviour becomes present on the Altar, and when, taking Him in our hands, we lift Him up on high, God the Father sees in His Person the perfect submission of a victim who immolates Himself to His justice, but He sees also in Him the felicity of His life, all the splendors of His

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glory and all the honors of His victory and His triumph.

On the Altar, as on the Cross, Jesus is a victim living and impassible as in the bosom of His Father. He is truly immolated and yet invulnerable; He seems as one struck and slain, bearing the scars of His wounds, but in His heart there is a fountain of life that triumphs over death and imparts immortality to the blessed. This is what we offer to God the Father when we lift the Sacred Host on high, and the sight, pleasing to His justice, ravishes His heart.

Lord, Thy name is great among the nations, because in every place sacrifice is offered to Thee; in Thy praise is offered an immaculate Host which shall honor Thee for ever more. A God offers the sacrifice; the sacrifice is a God; a victim, which is God, is immolated to honor God. It is true, then, O Lord, that one Mass, one solitary Mass gives Thee greater glory than all the stars, by the majestic regularity of their movements, could possibly have given Thee in six thousand years; than the sun in all its magnificence could have given Thee, or the tossing and heaving of the ocean, or the universe by the beauty of its order and its unvarying harmony, or even the Angels and Saints with their songs of praise and their ceaseless adoration.

But what a lesson for me! To give glory to His Father the Son of God came down from heaven, lived in poverty and in humble estate, died upon the gibbet of a malefactor and immolates Himself day by day upon our Altars; and I will set limits to my sacrifices; I will dread to do too much to honor so great a God,

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before whom all else is as nothing, before whom all else ceases to be. No, no, priest of the Living God, this must not be; take one look at the Altar: *Look and make it according to the pattern.*[1]

[1] Exod. xxv. 40.

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CHAPTER II.

JESUS CHRIST, MAKING HIMSELF ON THE ALTAR A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING, TEACHES HIS PRIESTS THE BEST MEANS BY WHICH TO DISCHARGE THEIR OWN DEBTS TO THE DIVINE GOODNESS AND THOSE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

THE giving of thanks is one of the most essential acts of religion. God owes us nothing, and yet we are encompassed by His benefits and inundated with His graces. He drew us out of nothing, created us in His own image and placed at our disposal all the gifts of nature. For us the sun goes round in its course and floods the earth with its beneficent light and vivifying warmth; for us the earth opens its bosom and is covered with wealth and beauty; for us the trees are clad in verdure and laden with fruit, fragrant and grateful to the taste. Were our tongues to sing forever the praises of God, and were all our aspirations so many ejaculations of gratitude and love, we should never be able to give adequate thanks for the benefits of creation.

But what shall I say of the blessings of redemption? Who will aid me in giving to the Lord a proper meed of gratitude for so inestimable, so incomprehensible a favor? In vain should I go up and down through the

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wide expanse of the universe seeking such aid; in vain should I go up even to high heaven; in vain should I call upon angels and men; aye, in vain should I gather within my heart all the praises of earth and heaven to offer them to God; I feel that even all this were not enough. What, then, shall I do? Ah, here is the great secret: *I will go up to the Altar of God*,[1] and there, taking Jesus in my hands, I will offer Him to His Father, and my debt to Him will be paid to the full. May we not then in the presence of this Adorable Victim confidently give thanks to God who has been so lavish, so munificently generous with His favors to us? Great God, we can say, so intense was Thy love for us that Thou didst give us Thine only Son, and so deep is our love for Thee that we give Thee in turn this selfsame Son. Thou wast not content to create for us the earth and the heavens, and neither are we content to offer Thee the heavens and the earth and all the world, aye, and a thousand worlds. We praise Thee infinitely, for the same act of love which Thou didst exercise towards us in giving us Thy Beloved Son we now exercise towards Thee in presenting Thee this selfsame Son. Thou didst give Him to us as the price of our ransom; we give Him back to Thee as the living image of Thy infinite perfections; Thou didst give Him to us disfigured, crimsoned with blood, a pattern of patience and sanctity; we give Him back to Thee bearing a diadem of splendor and glory, an object worthy of Thy eternal love.

Were not these the profound thoughts which were

[1] Psal. xlii. 4.

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present to the soul of David when he wrote: *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things He hath rendered unto me?*[1] As long as he had before his mind only the gifts of nature, profusely lavished upon him by divine munificence, the task of giving thanks, while great, was not wholly insuperable. He called upon all the nations of the earth, upon all the stars in the firmament, upon all creatures visible and invisible, to aid him in discharging his debt of gratitude to God. Praise the Lord, all ye nations, he says; praise Him, all ye peoples; ye heavenly spirits, praise His holy name; ye works of His hands, publish His glory. Let us sing a song of praise in His name, because the Lord is good, because He is merciful.

But when, illuminated by supernatural light, he comes to recognize the mystery of Incarnation, when he is conscious that God has given him His only Son, he no longer makes use of creatures as an aid in praising God, for he well knows that the sacrifices of all the peoples of the universe, that all the words and aspirations of praise and all the acts of thanksgiving of the courts of heaven, are as nothing in comparison of so stupendous a blessing. Be silent, weak mortals, he seems to say; be silent, men and angels, impotent creatures; of what avail is your weak homage, your imperfect praise, in giving thanks to God for a blessing of infinite worth?

What, then, shall I do? David goes on to say. Must I die without having given expression to my gratitude? The task is great and beyond the capacity

[1] Psal. cxv. 12.

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of all creatures; how shall I discharge it? He asks, he questions, he casts about in his perplexity, and of a sudden cries out in a transport of fervor: There upon the Altar of the true religion I see a Chalice filled to the brim with precious wine; this is what I need to discharge the debt which I owe to my God: *I will take the Chalice of Salvation;*[1] I will bathe my tongue in this Chalice; I will sprinkle my lips with this Blood; I will receive it into my heart; and in my heart, filled with the presence of God, I will sing songs of praise, make acts of thanksgiving that will be adequate to the blessings of my creation and to the incomparably greater blessings of my redemption: *I will take the Chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.*

The blessings of the Lord are the effects of His love. Now, only with love is love requited, and no other token of gratitude will be acceptable to God, because the precept of charity is the most excellent of all the Commandments and is the fulfilling of the Law.

But no creature, not even our incomparable Mother Mary, can love God as He deserves to be loved. Only one can so love, and this one is the Man-God. Even the Angels and Saints in heaven must supply their insufficiency by making their own the sentiments and affections of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

And is not this what we do in the Holy Mass? There we love in and through Jesus Christ. Our love is as a little drop which, mingling and dissolving in the vast ocean, participates of the divinity and is thus made

[1] Psal. cxv. 12.

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worthy of God. Jesus Christ is in my hands and reposes in my bosom at the moment of Holy Communion. I enter into His Divine Heart, I become one with Him. His love becomes mine, and while thus united with Him I present myself to His Father and say to Him: Father of Sanctity, deign to look upon the love I offer Thee! This love is not yours, He will say. That is true, O Lord, but now *He* is within me. *He* is mine, and I offer Him to Thee. Thou deservest to be infinitely loved; I hold within my heart a love that is infinite; to Thee do I offer it as an homage worthy of Thee.

We must conclude that the priest at the Altar is lifted up to a dazzling height; he has gone out from his lowliness and his nothingness; he has quit the earth and ascended up on high to the very heavens, above even the Angels themselves. He worthily honors the August Trinity by offering to the Three Adorable Persons a Victim of Infinite price and merit, and with this he fully discharges the debts of all humankind to the Eternal Father who created us, to the Son who redeemed us, and to the Holy Ghost who enriches us with His gifts.

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CHAPTER III.

JESUS CHRIST, A VICTIM OF PROPITIATION ON THE ALTAR, TEACHES HIS PRIESTS THE LENGTH TO WHICH THEY SHOULD CARRY THEIR ZEAL AND SACRIFICE FOR THE SALVATION OF THEIR BRETHREN.

THOUSANDS of religions, or rather innumerable counterfeits of the one true religion, divided the world before the coming of Christ. The one principle pervading them all was expiation. Expiation was the dominant idea of all cults and forms of worship, and expiation by the shedding of blood was everywhere regarded as the most efficacious. Blood flowed everywhere, animals the most inoffensive and harmless were immolated, and still there was no certainty that satisfaction had been made and other victims were sought. With the exception of the Jews, all peoples of antiquity believed that human sacrifices were necessary. The Carthaginians sacrificed babes free from every blemish; the Phœnicians and Assyrians also shed innocent blood; in Egypt a maiden was each year sacrificed for the safety of the country; Greece was a thousand times polluted by sacrifices that were an abomination; in ancient Gaul the Druids sacrificed old men to avert public calamities, and in India kings sacrificed themselves for the good of their people.

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Even in America at a later date human sacrifices were found to be as common as they had been centuries past in Europe, Asia and Africa. So universally, so profoundly rooted was the belief that the human race was degraded, fallen, guilty; that it could not be redeemed save by the shedding of blood; and that a victim pure and innocent must be sacrificed to make satisfaction to an angry God and to reconcile earth with heaven.

As soon, however, as Christianity had announced the completion of the sacrifice of the Cross, all other sacrifices came to an end; flocks were no longer decimated, and altars were no longer crimsoned with human blood. The Just One had paid the price and ransomed the guilty, and redemption was complete. There was no longer need of other sacrifices. The sacrifice on Calvary, of which the Mass is the renewal and continuation, is abundant for every need. Can heaven refuse to listen to the voice of the blood of a God asking graces for us upon the Altar?

History relates that of old a certain great captain, unjustly banished from his own country, sought refuge in the territory of a king against whom he had formerly waged war. Fearing his resentment, he secretly made his way into the palace of the absent monarch, and taking his son, still a lad, in his arms, held up to his majesty on his return this object of his love, at the same time supplicating pardon. The king, moved with compassion, lifted the captain up, embraced him and received him with favor at his court.

Priests of God, this is the expedient to which we

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have recourse to disarm the anger of an indignant God. While the worldly are running after pleasures and amusements; while sinners by their transgressions and their scandals are provoking the Almighty and calling down upon themselves the thunders of His wrath, what should the priest be doing? He should go up to the Altar and bring down from heaven the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world, the only Son of God the Father; he should take Him within his hands, and, thus protected by this precious pledge of love as with an impenetrable shield, he should go as a public minister, acting in the name of the entire Church, and, presenting himself at the throne of the Most High, crave pardon and mercy upon his brethren. At the sight of His Son, the Lord will avert His eyes from the enormity of man's iniquity and fix them upon the object of His love; the fire of His anger will be extinguished, and the bolts of His wrath will fall from His hands.

A Saint has said: If I pray, if I do penance, it is always with fear and trembling; but at the Altar I pray with confidence, because there Jesus Christ prays for me. At the Altar it is not I who do penance, but Jesus Christ who does it in my stead and in my behalf.

And in fact what is the sacrifice of the Mass? It is the living, moving representation of the sacrifice of the Cross and its powerful and efficacious application to men. It is its continuation down through the centuries among all generations called to be sharers in its blessings. It is the application to men one by one of the universal sacrifice of which Origen said: The Altar is in Jerusalem, but the blood of the Victim has bathed

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all the world. In the holy Mass is reenacted the whole life of Jesus Christ, all that He has done for us, all that He has done for the glory of His Father. For this reason the sacrifice imparts so deep a moral power to the ministry of the priesthood, so all-pervading a vitality to Catholic worship, whose ceremonies are all coordinated and lead up to this great action, as to their common centre.

O, with what sentiments of faith and devotion we would celebrate these Divine Mysteries if we could but see revealed before us all that goes on within them; if we could but see the heavens open and the clouds let down to make a way for the passing of the King of Glory; if we could but see the Angels who gather about the Altar, holding themselves at a distance, reverent and prostrate, while the priest alone stands erect. He penetrates the mysterious cloud, behind which the Incarnate Word abides, and, taking Him in his hands, offers Him to the Supreme Majesty as the Great Victim which is the reconciliation of earth with heaven.

Drops of Divine Blood, like cooling dew, fall upon and extinguish the fire of God's wrath and cancel the sins of the world. It is for us that marvels so stupendous are wrought, and many of us rarely give them a thought. Where is our faith? Why are we so thoughtless in celebrating, why so distracted and indifferent, why so undignified and hasty? Would we so conduct ourselves in the presence of one whom we honor and reverence? What? At that solemn moment, when Jesus Christ, obedient to our voice, comes

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down upon the Altar, and when He lies before us as one dead, are we to have no feeling of sorrow for our sins, no sigh of grief, no tears of tenderness? The truth is, we are present only in body, but we have neither faith nor love.

What must we do to shake off this lethargy, to rouse ourselves from this sluggishness, to make ourselves as reverent as were the Apostles? We must have a little faith, we must know what it means to be a priest. Answer me this: Can a priest who morning by morning sees the blood of the Adorable Victim running through his fingers ever think that he can do too much for a God who has done so much for him? And is it to be wondered at that of those who offer the sacrifice of the Lamb, many coming down from the Altar tear themselves from home and kindred and hasten away, some to wear out their lives amid toil and privations beneath the scorching sun of Africa, or in the deserts of Asia, or in the dense forests of America, or in the barbarous islands of Oceanica; while others go to Madura, to Ton-King and to Corea to replace their brethren who have been taken off by disease or who have fallen beneath the sword of the persecutor?

It is the Man-God sacrificed upon our Altar who has inspired and who still inspires and ennobles such heroic sacrifices. And when our Christian heroes and all our apostolic men, following closely in the footsteps of the Heavenly Giant who leads the way, begin to understand that all they can do, that their supremest efforts, are as nothing, they cry out with St. Francis Xavier expiring upon the shores of the

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Island of Sancian, after having undergone labors so appalling and achieved triumphs so magnificent: O Lord, what after all am I? Alas! only a vile and worthless servant.

All this, you will say, surprises me and covers me with shame. So many Masses and so few virtues! From this time forward I shall not celebrate so often. It is quite clear to me now that, since I am so lukewarm and so imperfect, I should not go up to the Altar every day.

I do not agree with you. You should seriously and earnestly strive to grow in perfection, but you should not leave off saying Mass, since this is the chief duty of a priest: *Every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.*[1] And you know what St. Bede says: *Sacerdos non legitime impeditus celebrare omittens, quantum in eo est, privat sanctam Trinitatem laude et gloria, angelos lætitia, peccatores venia, justos subsidio et gratia, in purgatorio existentes refrigerio, ecclesiam spirituali Christi beneficio, seipsum medicina et remedio.*

[1] Heb. v. 1.

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CHAPTER IV.

JESUS CHRIST, THE FOUNTAIN OF GRACE ON THE ALTAR, TEACHES HIS PRIESTS HOW THEY SHOULD FULFIL THEIR SUBLIME OFFICE OF MEDIATORS, AND DISPENSERS OF HEAVENLY GIFTS.

THE Holy Mass is the treasury of the Church. There God is most lavish of His richest graces; there Jesus Christ, through His minister, distributes the immensity of His wealth. The priest, holding the Host, has in his hands all the treasures of God Himself. From the Altar the priest pours out these treasures upon the bystanders whose hearts are open to receive them, then he distributes them to his household, to his parish and to all the Church. He reaches out to far-away regions and makes all the Christians of the world sharers in his blessings. He goes even beyond the Church, seeks out the needy and bestows upon them riches of inestimable price. He prays for the heretic and the infidel, and obtains for them grace and salvation. He does more, for even largesses so munificent have not exhausted the treasury in his keeping. He goes out from this and into another world, stands at the open doors of Purgatory and upon the shores of the lake of fire and pours out the Chalice of salvation upon the

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flames below. All those saintly souls rush towards him with holy eagerness, and of those who are fortunate enough to make their own those precious drops, some are relieved and refreshed and others, it may be, are set free and, going out from that abyss purer and more luminous than the sun, ascend like lightning up into heaven.

O priest, to you is entrusted the vast treasure of the blood of Jesus Christ. You alone have the power to offer up the august sacrifice which enriches the Church, gives joy to heaven and brings refreshment to souls amid the fires of Purgatory.

The holy Mass raises the priest to a state of supernatural greatness and imposes upon him, though a wayfarer on earth, the obligation of living a life wholly divine.

Take away the sacrifice of the Altar and you take away the life of the priest and make him useless. He will be no longer a mediator between God and men; he will no longer have power to bring down from heaven the Bread of Life and distribute it to the faithful; no longer will sinners come to him seeking pardon; there will be no longer Holy Communion, no longer confession. To what, then, will the ministry of the priest be reduced? To the task of reading to the people a page of the Bible, of distributing from time to time bread and wine from a common table. But any one can do this. To discharge such beggarly functions there is no need of being clad with the priestly character, no need of being an angel in the flesh and living a life of chastity. Thus Protestantism, in abolishing the

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sacrifice of the Mass, destroyed at the same time the priesthood, and cast the priest down from the supernatural height on which he stood to the vulgar level of an ordinary man, and imprisoned him with wife and children beneath the domestic roof.

But in the Catholic priest, clad in sacerdotal vesture, pronouncing the mystic words, renewing the stupendous scene on Calvary, what dignity, what stately and commanding power! When he is standing erect before the Altar, a mediator between God and His creatures, I see the Angels silent and in admiration, heaven and earth in suspense and the Blessed Trinity contemplating with pleasure the Adorable Victim that is being immolated by his hands. I see the Holy City redeemed by this great Victim, and all the faithful and all Christian peoples purpled with His blood. I see the Man-God, the Eternal High-priest, the Omnipotent Mediator, gathering into Himself all creation, making of it an universal sacrifice and offering it all to the Majesty of His Father. What ineffable prodigies are wrought through our hands and by the agency of our words! What an obligation rests upon us to be saints, aye, and to be great saints. The Church is amazed that the Son of God should deign to be born of the womb of the purest of virgins: *Non horruisti virginis uterum.* What, then, should be the sanctity of one who brings Him down day by day upon the Altar?

My God, if all priests were saints, if all priests handled the sacred mysteries worthily, what treasures of grace they would bring down upon themselves and upon all Christian peoples! They would spread abroad

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through all the earth a divine fire; they would melt the ice of indifference and impiety; they would rouse the slumbering faith of all hearts; and with faith all virtues would live again, and we should once more see the golden age of the Infant Church.

Priests, the fate of the people rests with you; both life and death are in your hands. Be holy at the Altar and the world will be saved.

A day will come when a strict account will be demanded of the use made of so enormous a power, so startling a prerogative, of which even the Angels are jealous, having a holy envy of men who enjoy so inestimable a privilege.

O veneranda sacerdotum dignitas in quorum manibus veluti in utero Virginis, Dei Filius incarnatur! O sacrum et cœleste ministerium, quod per vos Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus operatur. Uno eodemque modo idem Deus, qui præsidet in cœlis, in manibus vestris est in sacramento altaris. O venerabilis sanctitudo manuum! O felix exercitium! O vere mundi gaudium! Christus tractat Christum, idest sacerdos Dei Filium, cujus sunt deliciæ esse cum filiis hominum; et quod datum non est angelis, concessum est homini. Sacerdos hoc ineffabile conficit mysterium, et angeli conficienti sibi, quasi famuli, assistunt; super hoc tam insigni privilegio stupet cœlum, miratur terra, veretur homo, horret infernus; contremiscit diabolus, et veneratur quamplurimum angelica celsitudo.[1]

[1] St. Aug.

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CHAPTER V.

SENTIMENTS OF THE FATHERS WITH REGARD TO THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS.

I.

DE MODO OFFERENDI.

MUNDE, et recte, et legitime. S. Iren. ad Hær. Indigne sumis, si non accedis reverenter, circumspecte et considerate. S. Bonav. *De Præp. ad Miss.*

1. Munde seu circumspecte.

Mundities cordis.—Satis . . . apparet omnem operam et diligentiam in eo ponendam esse, ut quanta maxima fieri potest interiori munditia et puritate . . . peragatur. Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII.

Verbum prophetæ est: Mundamini qui fertis vasa Domini. Quanto mundiores esse oportet qui in manibus et corpore portant Christum. P. Blæs.

Probet seipsum homo.—Non sola mortalia vitanda sunt, sed venalia per negligentiam multiplicata, et etiam per inconsiderationem et distractionem dissolutæ vitæ et malæ consuetudinis; licet enim non occidant animam, reddunt tamen hominem tepidum, gravem et obnubilatum, nisi dicti pulveris et stipulæ venialium,

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per afflatum spiritus et flammam caritatis ventilentur et consummantur. Ideo cave ne nimis tepidus ac inordinatus accedas, quia indigne sumis . . . de quibus Apostolus: Judicium sibi manducat. S. Bonav.

Mundities Corporis.—Accinctis renibus Agnum jubemur comedere . . . ut, castitate præcincti, . . . comedamus Agnum. . . . Sciendum quod Agnuum Dei sine macula, qui virginis Filius est, luxuriosi et incesti sumunt periculosius: quia cum in Sacramento Christi ei uniri debeamus conformitate passionis et munditiæ, nihil sic adversatur passioni crucis ut voluptas, nihil sic munditiæ, ut fæditas. Alger. *De sacr. Corp. Christ.*

Dispositio corporis honesta devotionis provocat affectum et designat. S. Bonav.

Mundities Altaris.—Caveant sacerdotes ne vasa sacra, ut calices, pyxides, imo ne urceoli quidem, nec sacerdotalia qualiacumque ornamenta sordibus scateant. Conc. Mediol.

Nimis videtur absurdum in sacris sordes negligere quæ dedecerent etiam in profanis. Inn. III.

2. *Recte seu reverenter.*

Cum pura intentione. . . . Non potest sacerdos illa intentione celebrare . . . ut ex hoc pecuniam consequatur, quia peccaret mortaliter. S. Thom. Op. 65 de S. M.

Non enim longe absunt a simoniaca labe et turpi quæstu, ex Conc. Trid. auctoritate, qui non alio quam pecuniarum intuitu Missas frequentant. Conc. Turon. an. 1583.

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Tria autem sunt quæ celebraturus intendere debet, scilicet Deum per latriam colere, Christi mortem memorare et totam Ecclesiam juvare. S. Bonav.

Cum debita veneratione.—Quanta cura adhibenda sit, ut sacrosanctum Missæ sacrificium omni religionis cultu et veneratione celebretur, quisquis facile existimare poterit, qui cogitarit maledictum in sacris litteris eum vocari, qui facit opus Dei negligenter.

Et tu ergo, ante illud tempus stupendum, venerare et obstupesce, et assurge antequam videas expansas vestes, stragulas et tapetes, et procedentem angelorum chorum, in ipsum cœlum ascende. S. Chryst.

Cum magno pietatis sensu.—Qui ordinate vult aliquid Deo offere, primum seipsum offerat. Conc. Aquisgr.

Unuquisque nostrum habet in se holocaustum suum, et qui ipse succendit altare, ut semper ardeat. Orig.

Necesse est ut, dum hæc agimus, nosmetipsos Deo in cordis contritione mactemus; quia qui passionis Dominicæ mysteria celebramus, debemus imitari quod agimus. S. Greg.

Tunc (sacerdoti) hostia proderit, si seipsum hostiam faciens, velit humiliter et efficaciter imitari quod agit. P. Blæs.

3. Legitime seu ordinate.

Quantum ad tempus.—Ne sacerdos aliis quam debitis horis celebrent. Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII.

Quantum ad ritus.—Ne sacerdotes, ritus alios aut alias cæremonias et preces in Missarum celebratione adhibeant, præter eas quæ ab ecclesia probatæ et laudibili usu receptæ fuerint. Id. ead. sess.

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Appone diligentiam magnam in signis et actibus, maiorem in verbis, maximam in intentione. S. Bonav.

II.

DE VARIA OFFERENTIUM DISPOSITIONE.

1. *De raro celebrantibus.*

O quantæ angustiæ me undique affligentes! Accedere indigne, horrendum est judicium; non accedere ex notabile negligentia vel contemptu, damnabilis est culpa. . . . Quia sicut ait Ambrosius, si quotiescumque effunditur sanguis Christi, toties in remissionem effunditur, debeo illum semper accipere, ut semper mihi peccata dimittantur. S. Beda et S. Bonav.

2. *De tepide celebrantibus.*

Passionem Christi evacuant, totumque negotium nostræ redemptionis irrident, qui cum summa humilitate et diligentia non attendunt cum quanta reverentia caro et sanguis Christi debeat confici, quam industrie dispensari. P. Blæs. *Serm. 18, in Cœna Dom.*

Vide quid agas, sacerdos, ne febrienti manu corpus Christi attingas. Ambr. lib. *De Viduis Cap. X.*

3. *De indigne celebrantibus.*

Si manducans et bibens indigne, sive communicans tantum, judicium sibi manducant et bibit; multo magis qui indigne sacrificat. Simeon. Arch. Thessal. *Ad sacerd.*

Audet . . . scelestas blasphemias suas (neque enim

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preces dixerim) in divinis mysteriis Christi firmiter pronuntiare; non est iste sacerdos, non est, sed inimicus, dolosus, illusor sui, et lupus in gregem dominicum ovina pelle armatus. S. Dionys. Areop. *Epist ad Demophil.*

Quicumque ad altare Domini accedit inquinatus luxuria, juxta Filium Virginis idolum ponit Veneris; qui sacra illius verba sacramenti ore immundo profert, in faciem Salvatoris spuit. Et cum in os immundum sanctissimam carnem ponit, eam quasi in lutum platearum projicit. Ex. serm. *Petr. Comest. ad judicat.*

Qui debuerunt esse vicarii apostolorum et filii Petri facti sunt socii Judæ, et preambuli antichristi. Verbum quippe Gregorii est. Qui corpus Christi indigne conficit, Christum tradit, ut Christus dum traditur, dicat: Ecce manus tradentis me mecum est in mensa. Angustinus super illum versiculum; Dederunt in escam meam fel: Gravius, inquit, peccant offerentes indigne Christum regnantem in cœlis, quam qui eum crucifixerunt ambulantem in terris. Perfidus Judæus, perfidus Christianus, ait Hieronymus; ille de latere, iste de calce sanguinem Christi fundit. P. Blæs. *Ep. 123 ad Richard.*

4. De pie celebrantibus.

Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi? calicem salutaris accipiam. Psalm cxv.

Sacramentum unitatis, vinculum pacis, consortium charitatis, expiationi sacrificium, devotionis oblatio, honoris delatio, exhibitio fidei, pabulum sanctitatis

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atque immolatio pietatis. S. Laur. Just. *De reg. Præf 21.*

Accessistis ad aspersionem sanguinis melius loquentem quam Abel. Hebr. xii.

Quantum fidei capacis afferimus, tantum gratiæ mundantis haurimus. S. Cyprian.

Hæc namque singulariter victima ab interitu animam salvat, quæ illam nobis mortem Unigeniti per mysterium reparat. S. Greg. Dial IV. 58.

Quod Iudæi per invidiam et odium immolaverunt, putantes se Christi nomem a terra abolere, hoc ipsum nos causa nostræ salutis in ara sanctificata præponimus, scientes hoc solo remedio nobis vitam præstandam et mortem effugandam; hoc enim Dominus jussit nos agere in sui commemorationem. *Epist. Ad Burdegalenses*, Cap. III, in vita S. Martialis, qui, ut creditur, fuit unus ex 72 discipulis.

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Intention of the Priest in going up to the Altar.

O my God, I wish to offer this August Sacrifice for the end for which Jesus Christ instituted it. I wish to offer it that, through Jesus Christ and in the name of the Church and of all creatures, I may give Thee infinite honor; I wish to offer it in thanksgiving to Thee for Thy prodigal liberality to the Sacred Humanity of the Saviour, to the august Mother of God, to all Saints and all creatures. I wish to offer it to appease Thy justice outraged by sin. I desire also to obtain the conversion of all sinners, the pardon of all sin, and the remission of all punishment due to men because of sin. I wish to offer it to obtain the increase of Thy glory in all the world, the exaltation of the adorable name of Jesus, the spread of the faith, the perseverance of the just and those spiritual and other aids of which Thy creatures stand in need.

I wish to offer this Sacrifice as a creature with and in behalf of all creatures, because we are the work of Thy hands; as a Christian filled with gratitude with and in behalf of all Christians alike grateful, because Thou hast redeemed, cleansed and ennobled us; as a priest with and in behalf of priests to fulfil in the name of Jesus Christ and of the Church the most sublime rite of my priesthood.

O my God, grant that I may be filled with the spirit of faith and piety, with the spirit of Jesus Christ, that I may be sanctified with Him, spiritually transformed into Him, and that I may be able to say with St. Paul, *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*[1]

[1] Galat. ii. 20.

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CHAPTER VI.

THANKSGIVING.

THE moments immediately following Holy Communion are incomparably precious. During this time the priest can profitably occupy himself with the interests, first, of his own soul, and, next, of all the works which his zeal has inspired him to undertake.

A pious priest coming down from the Altar and bearing God in his heart will walk profoundly recollected to the sacristy, take off his vestments in silence, and then go aside to enjoy in peace his great good fortune. There, annihilated in the presence of the Man-God, who has so graciously deigned to look upon him in his abasement, and who is now within him, he will adore and contemplate with admiration and love his Saviour abiding in his heart, as in a sanctuary of His own choosing, and he will see in vision the Angels coming in troops from heaven and forming a guard of honor about their King. Unable to express the amazement, admiration and transport with which his whole being is filled, he will call to his aid all creatures, Angels and men, and first and before all the Queen of the Angels, and he will implore them to give him, if only for a few brief moments, their hearts and their

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burning love, that he too may fittingly love and thank and praise his Saviour.

Then, turning to the Blessed Trinity and showing the Divine Guest who has taken up His abode in his bosom, he will say confidently: O Most Holy God, look no longer upon me as a vile sinner or as a miserable creature; the vileness of my being is lost and absorbed in the infinitely perfect Being of the Word-made-Flesh. I praise Thee with His tongue, I bless Thee with His lips, I love Thee with His heart; I offer Thee His thanks as mine, and I adore Thee with His infinite adoration. At such a moment the soul seems to have gone out from the body and to have gone up to heaven, for it is, as it were, swallowed up in God. At such a moment you may ask, nay, you may take, you may seize what you like, for you have within you the fountain of all grace.

Having satisfied these first and importunate yearnings of love and gratitude, the interior priest will for a time cease thinking and willing, and remain passive, recollected and at peace, as was Magdalen at the feet of Jesus, and he will listen to his Divine Guest, speaking down in the depths of his heart, allowing Him to do His work in the soul, taking care not to interrupt by unseemly thought or speech what is being so divinely accomplished. What goes on during these moments between Jesus and His faithful priest? Ah, do not ask, this is the secret of fervent priests, a secret that the tepid, the careless and the dissipated will never know, because they will never know how to appreciate the great gift of God, since on coming down

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from the Altar they are content, as it were, to salute Jesus Christ in passing and to speak to Him for a moment at the door of their soul, without inviting Him into that mystical sanctuary, that secret chamber, where He speaks as heart to heart with His friends.

But if the holy intimacy between Jesus and His chosen priests is a hidden mystery, its effects are visible enough.

Those who digest well their food feel an increase of strength, the result of having their nourishment distributed throughout all portions of the body. Similarly, as St. Francis de Sales remarks, those who, having received the Sacred Body of their Saviour, digest well this divine food, feel that Jesus Christ diffuses and communicates Himself through all the faculties of their soul and throughout their whole body. Jesus is in their intellect and heart,—He looks out through their eyes, He thrills on their tongue, in short, He pervades their entire being. And what does the Divine Saviour do while thus dwelling in and pervading intellect and will, soul and body? He sets all things to rights, He chastens and sanctifies all. It is He who comprehends in the intellect, who determines in the will, who loves with the heart, who sees with the eyes, who speaks with the tongue, and who governs and directs all the members of the body. Then, in truth, has the priest life within him, or, rather, it is not he who lives, but Jesus Christ who lives within him; then can he say literally and truly: *Sacerdos alter Christus.* It was precisely this that made St. Paul say of himself: ***I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.***[1]

[1] Galat. ii. 20.

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O unspeakable greatness of the man who is born again in Christ, a greatness excelling even that of man in his innocence before the fall! O incomprehensible dignity of the priest in whom and by whom such stupendous marvels are daily wrought! O prodigy of divine love! O precious pledge of never-ending union with God! O divine Eucharist! O Bread of Life! All my consolation, all my happiness in this vale of tears will be to nourish myself with this Bread of heaven in the hope of one day seeing It revealed as It is and feeding upon It for a blessed eternity!

O Sacramentum pietatis! O signum unitatis! O vinculum charitatis! Qui vult vivere, habet ubi vivat, unde vivat. Accedat, credat, incorporetur ut vivificetur; hæreat corpori, vivat Deo, de Deo.[1]

PRO GRATIARUM ACTIONE.

Oratio S. Bonaventuræ.

Transfige, dulcissime Domine Jesu, medullas et viscera animæ meæ suavissimo ac saluberrimo amoris tui vulnere, vera serenaque et apostolica sanctissima charitate, ut langueat et liquefiat anima mea solo semper amore et desiderio tui; te concupiscat, et deficiat in atria tua; cupiat dissolvi et esse tecum. Da ut anima mea te esuriat, panem Angelorum, refectionem animarum sanctarum, panem nostrum quotidianum, supersubstantialem, habentem omnem dulcedinem et saporem, et omne delectamentum suavitatis; te, in quem desiderant Angeli prospicere, semper esuriat et

[1] S. Aug. Pract. 26 in Cap. VI. Joan.

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comedat cor meum, et dulcedine saporis tui repleantur viscera animæ meæ; te semper sitiat fontem vitæ, fontem sapientiæ et scientiæ, fontem æterni luminis, torrentem voluptatis, ubertatem domus Dei; te semper ambiat, te quærat, te inveniat, ad te tendat, ad te perveniat, te meditetur, te loquatur, et omnia operetur in laudem et gloriam nominis tui, cum humilitate et discretione, cum dilectione et delectatione, cum facilitate et affectu, cum perseverantia usque in finem; et tu sis solus semper spes mea, salus mea, tota fiducia mea, divitiæ meæ, delectatio mea, jucunditas mea, gaudium meum, quies et tranquillitas mea, pax mea, suavitas mea, odor meus, dulcedo mea, cibus meus, refectio mea, refugium meum, auxilium meum, sapientia mea, portio mea, et possessio mea, thesaurus meus, in quo fixa, et firma, et immobiliter sit radicata mens mea et cor meum. Amen.

Alia oratio post Missam.

Gratias ago tibi, omnipotens et misericors Deus, gratiarum actiones tremendæ majestatis tuæ, piissime et immense Pater, habeo, quia me, indignissimum et nefandissimum peccatorem, pretioso corpore et sanguine Filii tui Domini nostri Jesu Christi consolari et satiare dignatus es. Quæso igitur, dulcissime Domine Jesu, ut hæc sancta communio non sit mihi ad judicium et condemnationem; sed tua gratia et pietate sit mihi suavitas et dulcedo, animæ meæ salus et sanctitas, in omni tentatione pax et gaudium, in omni tribulatione lumen et virtus, in omni verbo et opere solatium, et

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tutela finalis in morte, ad evadendas omnium inimicorum meorum insidias; et proficiat mihi ad salutem corporis et animæ in vitam æternam; et præsta ut ibi nulla remaneat peccati macula, ubi tua sancta introierunt sacramenta, qui cum Patre et Spiritu sancto vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Oratio devota Th. a Kempis quotidie dicenda.

Adjuvet nos gratia tua, omnipotens Deus, ut qui officium sacerdotale suscepimus, digne ac devote tibi cum omni puritate et in conscientia bona famulari valeamus. Et si non possumus in tanta innocentia vitæ conservari, ut debemus, concede nobis tamen digne flere mala, quæ gessimus; ut in spiritu humilitatis ac bonæ voluntatis proposita, tibi ferventius deservire valeamus. Amen.

Oratio ad Deum Filium.

Anima Christi sanctissima, sanctifica me; Corpus Christi sacratissimum, salva me; Sanguis Christi pretiosissime, inebria me; Aqua lateris Christi purissima, munda me; Sudor vultus Christi virtuosissime, sana me; Passio Christi piissima, conforta me. O bone Jesu, custodi me. Intra vulnera tua absconde me. Non permittas me separari a te. Ab hoste maligno defende me. In hora mortis meæ voca me. Jube me venire ad te, et pone me juxta te, ut cum Angelis et Archangelis tuis laudem te per infinita sæculorum sæcula. Amen.

Obsecro te, mitissime et bone Jesu, ut hæc immor-

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talitatis hostia pro me tibi gratias referat, me tibi reconciliet, me tibi restituat, mihique peccatori veniam tribuat, et ad vitam perducat æternam. Amen.

Recedo a te modicum, Domine Jesu, sed non sine te, consolatio, felicitas et omne bonum animæ meæ; et me amantissimo cordi tuo, cum omnibus fratribus, amicis et inimicis meis humillime commendo. Ama nos, Domine, et transforma quam simillime in te. Toties occuper in te et propter te; nihilque sit objectum verborum meorum actionumque mearum internarum et externarum, nisi tu, amor meus, qui vivis. . . .

Ad Beatissimam Virginem.

Obsecro te, O piissima Virgo Maria, per amorem quo Filius tuus jam moriturus in cruce seipsum Patri suo, te vero discipulo suo et hunc vicissim tibi commendavit, ut me suscipias in curam et tutelam tuam, et adsis mihi in omnibus periculis et angustiis totius vitæ meæ, sed præcipue in hora mortis. Amen.

Oratio.

Amo te, Domine Jesu, jucunditas mea et requies mea; amo te, summum et unicum bonum meum, ex toto corde, ex tota mente, ex tota anima, ex totis viribus meis; et si tu vides me in hoc deficere, saltem desidero amare te. Succende, Domine, igne tuo ardentissimo viscera mea, et quandoquidem nonnisi amorem petis a me, da quod jubes et jube quod vis. Nisi enim dederis mihi velle et perficere, peribo utique in infirmitate mea. Sonet vox tua in auribus meis,

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vox illa dulcissima et efficacissima, volo; nam si vis, potes me mundare et illuminare, potes me ad supremum amoris gradum elevare. Sicut voluisti pro me pati et mori, ita etiam velis ut appareat in me fructus passionis et mortis tuæ. Memento verbi tui servo tuo, in quo mihi spem dedisti. Tu enim dixisti: qui manducat meam carnem et bibet meum sanguinem, in me manet et ego in eo. O dulcissimum verbum, tu in me et ego in te! O quantus amor, tu in vilissimo peccatore, et ego in te, Deus meus, cujus majestas incomprehensibilis est! Unum est mihi necessarium, et hoc solum quæro, in te vivere, in te quiescere, a te nunquam separari. Felix est qui te quærit, felicior qui te possidet, felicissimus qui in hac possessione perseverat et moritur. Vive et regna semper in me, fidelissime amator animæ meæ: in te enim sunt omnia bona, et jam deinceps paratus sum omnia potius mala perpeti, quam ut unquam cessem amare te. O corpus sacratissimum quinque vulneribus sauciatum, pone te ut signaculum super cor meum, et imprime illi charitatem tuam. Obsigna pedes meos, ut sequar vestigia tua; obsigna manus, ut bona semper opera exerceam; obsigna latus, ut ferventissimos amoris tui actus proferam in æternum. O sanguis pretiosissime, qui omnem hominem abluis et purificas, lava animam meam et pone signum in faciem meam, ut nullum præter te amatorem admittam. O dulcedo cordis mei, et vita animæ meæ, sicut tu in Patre et Pater in te est, ita ego per gratiam tuam unus tecum sim amore et voluntate, mihique mundus crucifixus sit, et ego mundo. Amen.

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Ad Angelum Custodem.

Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum pietate superna, hodie illumina, custodi, rege atque guberna. Amen. Indulg. 100 dierum.

Ad Deum.

Fiat, laudetur atque in æternum superexaltetur justissima, altissima et amabilissima Dei voluntas in omnibus. Amen. Indulg. 100 dierum.

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Consideration Sixth.

THE LIFE OF GLORY.

Section First.

Jesus in His Life of Glory the Pattern of the Priest.

JESUS CHRIST in His life of glory and triumph teaches His priests how splendid are the rewards of those who toil as apostles.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE Son of God came into this world to inaugurate and carry on a conflict of good against evil. He had already overcome the pride of the prince of this world by becoming incarnate, thus humbling and annihilating Himself; He had shattered the illusions of worldly pomp and wealth by His poverty in the manger; He had laid bare the deceits of false and seductive pleasure by a life of labor and toil.

But even these conquests, the result of three-and-thirty years of conflict, were not enough to satisfy so great a captain. He wished before quitting this earth, by one splendid and luminous victory, to utterly over-

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come, to bring to His feet all the powers of hell, and to teach those who would enroll themselves under His standard the great art and the divine tactics by which spiritual warfare is to be conducted.

To this end He challenged all His enemies to a general battle and He designated Calvary as the battle-ground. The conflict was terrific, the devil and his minions were fully armed and equipped when the day arrived. With them it was a question of empire, of life and death, and they mustered all their forces.

You have seen our King going forth to do battle against those formidable enemies. He clothed Himself in His divine armor; His weapon was the Cross; and with this He put His enemies to flight. He followed up His victory, pursued them to the heights of Calvary, struck them down, dispersed them and cast them into the pit below. Hell trembled to its deepest depths, to its most remote recesses, and Jesus Christ from the Cross cried: *Have confidence, I have overcome the world.*[1]

Still this victory, though decisive and glorious, was, or seemed to be, for a moment dimmed; to all appearance the Victor was vanquished and His very triumph was His defeat.

To inspire courage in His followers it was necessary to demonstrate to them that, in this new method of warfare, to die is to overcome and to gain immortal glory.

On the morning of the third day Jesus came forth from the tomb full of life and vigor and resplendent with light and glory: *Clad in light as with a garment.*[2]

[1] John xvi. 33. [2] Psal. ciii. 2.

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Is this the body that but a little while ago we saw in so shocking a condition? Is this the flesh that was torn and fell in shreds to the ground? Where, O my Saviour, are the bruises that disfigured Thy countenance? Where are the nails, the crown of thorns, the deadly lance? True, I still see the scars in Thy hands, in Thy feet and in Thy side, but from them come forth rays of living light, the pledges of Thy victory: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.*

Such, Jesus says, are the rewards of a life of sacrifice and struggle. All the wounds received by men waging war for Me will be changed by My Father into so many rays of glory.

Having for forty days showed Himself to His disciples in His risen humanity, in His glorified and impassible body, He bids them go up to Mt. Olivet, there to witness His triumphal ascension. When He had bid them farewell He rose majestically and ascended up to heaven, blessing as He went those whom He had loved beyond measure. In His ascent He took with Him that host of the just, of Patriarchs and Prophets, to whose weary exile He had put an end. He went before them pointing the way, and they in an ecstasy of joy followed Him, repeating alternately: Sing ye to God, sing a psalm to His name, *make way for Him who ascendeth upon the West, the Lord is His name.*[1] Blessed be Thou, our Lord and God, who savest those who trust in Thee. Be Thou glorified in the heavens above, Thou who dost lead us to a place

[1] Psal. lxvii. 5.

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of refreshment and peace. Glory and praise and honor to Thee, Christ the Redeemer and King.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes.[1] My King cometh in triumph to take possession of His Kingdom. And ye, blessed citizens of the heavenly court, come forth and welcome the King of Glory. And they all go forth to meet Him; choirs of Angel hosts hasten to form His cortège and to honor His triumph, making the air resonant with the music of their voices as they sing: *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.*[2]

And the Patriarchs who follow Jesus, mingling their voices with the music of the Angels, sing: *Alleluia!* Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. *Alleluia!* Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who didst come down from Thy throne of glory to ransom fallen man. *Alleluia!* Thou art worthy of all praise and honor because Thou hast gained a glorious victory. *Alleluia!*

While these acclamations resound and canticles are sung, my King, passing through all the celestial spheres, arrives at the gate of heaven.

And now these gates that had been shut against the human race are thrown open and Jesus Christ, the Head of regenerated humanity, surrounded by His splendid cortège, enters in. He goes straight to His Father and, kneeling down, says: My Father, I thank Thee for having given Me the victory over the world and the devil. The empire of Satan has fallen, Thy holy name is glorified, henceforth Thou shalt have on

[1] Psal. xxiii. 7. [2] Apoc. v. 12.

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earth worshippers who will adore Thee in spirit and in truth and who, as time goes on, will make populous the Holy City. Here are these, the first-fruits of redemption; they are the souls of the just, who were detained in prison, and whom I now bring to the foot of Thy throne. The Father embraces His Beloved Son, saying: *Thou art My Beloved Son, this day have I begotten Thee*,[1] and makes Him sit at His right hand: *Sit Thou at My right hand*,[2] and all the Angels fall prostrate in adoration: *Adore Him, all ye angels*.[3] Then the songs of joy and triumph begin anew; David, seizing his divine harp, sings a new canticle, and the vaults of the heavenly Jerusalem shake with the echoes of an everlasting *Alleluia*.

What pomp and majesty, what a magnificent triumph! And yet it is not so much the triumph of Jesus Christ as it is ours. Being the Son of God He had an unquestionable right to heaven, and yet He would also purchase it and pay as the purchase-price His own blood. He has then a double right to heaven, a natural and an acquired right. The first He keeps as specifically His own, but of the other what use has He except to transfer it to those who share with Him the hardships of His struggles and His conflicts? *To Him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne*.[4]

Now that we have followed our Divine Master through all the principal events of His mission we are in a position to judge with some degree of exactness

[1] Acts xiii. 33. [2] Luke xx. 42.
[3] Psal. xcvi. 7. [4] Apoc. iii. 21.

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what are our duties as men, as Christians, and as priests.

Our call to Christianity and to the priesthood makes it obligatory upon us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus our King, to fight by His side in a war that is both just and honorable, in which it is certain that the victory will be ours, and of which the reward will be peace of heart in this life, and glory in the life to come.

Let us meditate upon these things so well calculated to evoke the zeal and kindle the ardor of an apostolic man.

1. *The Justice and Grandeur of the Undertaking.*

As men we must reestablish within us the dignity of human nature and reach the end for which we were created. Man is not merely an animal whose only function is to eat and to digest, he is also an intellectual being endowed with the faculty of thought. He is not a miserable abortion who has drifted into this little world of ours by chance, to vegetate here for a time, and then to pass into the nothingness from which he came; he has an immortal soul, and a future awaits him beyond the grave. Nothing sadder can be imagined or more detrimental to man, to the development of his intellect and the free play of his mental faculties than the absence of religious convictions and the uncertainty as to a truth of such prime importance as his future destiny.

Moral philosophy tells us that an intellect not guided by principles regards everything as the result of chance.

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Hence it is clear that if man is to be safely and wisely directed, if he is to be a finished and complete man, dogma is absolutely necessary as the basis of his mental equipment.

Now, those alone who are united with Jesus Christ can know with certainty the purpose and scope of this life, and they alone yearn and labor incessantly to accomplish it. Penetrated with His teaching they spurn all that is fleeting, all that is temporary; for them the world is but a trysting-place, a tent set up in a desert land, and heaven is their true home and the dwelling-place of peace. The goods of the world are on every side of them, but they pass them by; the world invites them, but they heed it not; their thoughts are fixed on what is heavenly and immortal; to them nothing is great or important or worthy a noble soul and generous heart save the interests of eternity.

And surely they are right, for after all the one important thing, the affair that is everything to man, is to give glory to God and save his own soul: *Hoc est enim omnis homo.*

As Christians we must practise still higher virtues and rise to a state of supernatural perfection.

You have subdued the turbulence of the passions, you have given to reason the sovereignty that belongs to it. Well and good; but did not the wise men who are the boast of Paganism do as much: *Do not also the heathen this?*[1] You are loyal to your friends, and were not the pagans equally so? You are not guilty of fraud or injustice, and did not the pagans detest

[1] Matt. v. 47.

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these also? You abhor adultery, you are ashamed of being a glutton, and you spurn the grosser pleasures, but did not the pagans equally abominate these shameful vices? A soldier of Jesus Christ reaches out to nobler conquests, he aspires to sterner virtues. Onward, onward, let this be your cry. In going forward you will find everywhere the justice of the Jews, of the Pharisees and of the Doctors of the Law. Be not content with this, this is a justice that lies on the outside: *Ye are like to whited sepulchres;*[1] or if it be real, it is insufficient for perfection: *Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*[2] Go higher and still higher, until you approach the sanctity and perfection of your Heavenly Father: *Be ye perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect.*[3] This is the perfection which Jesus Christ names as that to which we should aspire, after which we should strive.

As priests we are commissioned officers in the army of Jesus Christ, we are captains in the great conflict against the genius of evil. We are men of God, pledged to defend His rights, to extend His Kingdom and to gain souls. We are the guardians of society, charged with elevating it and making it more divine, with calling its members in season and out of season to a knowledge and sense of their immortal destiny, with extirpating its vices and cultivating its virtues. Could there be a mission more honorable or an enterprise more glorious?

Oh, if the ambitious and those who are vexed and

[1] Matt. xxiii. 27. [2] Ibid. v. 20. [3] Ibid. v. 48.

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troubled with the affairs of this world, who endure so many fatigues and hardships in making money and seeking honors, only gave a little time to serious reflection; if the intellectual and the cultivated, who are wearing out their lives in laborious vigils and barren studies, who display so much talent and eloquence in the tribune and in the forum on questions of little moment and passing interest, only entered into themselves and thought seriously; if they only knew the worth of immortal souls; if they only realized what alone is great in the sight of God and His angels, and that of all things the sweetest and most consoling to a generous heart is to be able to make his fellow men eternally happy, then indeed would they hasten to forsake the ungrateful tasks in which their days and nights are squandered; then would they enroll themselves with us under the standard of Christ and throw their whole hearts into the work of saving souls and making conquests for their Master and King.

Blessed, O Lord, be Thy holy name, because in calling me to this sublime work Thou hast graciously permitted me to give to the service of the holiest of causes a life for which I am indebted solely to Thy bountiful goodness.

Often and often in calling to mind the prodigies of Thy love and the countless benefits and blessings Thou hast heaped upon me I address Thee in the words of the Royal Prophet: *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things He has rendered unto me?*[1] Now, at this moment, O my God, Thou dost bring them to my

[1] Psal. cxv. 12.

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memory; Thou dost show me, too, the vast multitude of sinners who are sleeping the sleep of death, the slaves of some idol of ambition or carnal pleasure, hanging over the edge of a precipice, the abyss below open and ready to swallow them, and Thou dost say to me: Hasten, rush forward to the rescue of these unfortunate souls and rouse the faith within them. Do not hesitate to face any difficulty or danger, take no account of time or health or life, provided only you can snatch them from eternal ruin; gather up the drops of My Blood sprinkled upon them, of which they know not the value. Whatever you shall do unto your brethren I shall account as done unto Me, and you will thus discharge to Me your debt of gratitude.

Here I am, O Lord, ready to go whither Thou callest; my only wish, my only desire, is to toil and struggle, even to my last breath, in so great, so noble a cause.'

2. *Certainty of a Successful Issue.*

Our leader in this warfare is the Man-God. The kings of this world do not as a rule expose their lives to danger by going to war; they remain in their capitals, and send soldiers to face the enemy on the field of battle.

Our King does quite differently. He goes in person to meet the enemy. He puts Himself at the head of His soldiers, drills them, teaches them how to conquer, infuses into them His own courage, and then says to them: There is the enemy, follow Me. He throws Himself into the thick of the fight, deals terrible blows,

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carries confusion into their ranks, puts them to flight, and opens to His soldiers the road to victory. But you will say: How can we follow the Heavenly Giant who is leading us on? We are but weak mortals and incapable of overcoming so powerful an enemy, one, too, towards whom we feel a certain tenderness and who is acquainted with the secret weaknesses of our hearts. The enemy with whom we are expected to join battle is our own passions, our very selves. This is a difficult struggle, and one the issue of which is by no means certain.

Yes, the struggle is a hard one, but we bear in our hands weapons that are invincible. These weapons are prayer, by which we implore divine grace, and the Blessed Eucharist, which inspires our courage and makes us heroes. Unhappy indeed is the priest to whom the Bread of the Strong does not impart sufficient strength and energy to carry him through the conflict for an entire day. But there is no end to this conflict, you say, for scarcely is the enemy beaten than he is up and at you again, and the same battle is to be ever renewed.

Yes, but life from beginning to end is a warfare; and is a soldier, while on the field of battle, surprised at seeing the enemy constantly renewing his attacks? There will never be an end to this warfare as long as we are on this earth; for this we must wait until we go to heaven. Our enemy is within us, and will only die when we die. The annihilation of the passions in this life was a chimerical idea of the Stoics, an idea at once impracticable and absurd. The Christian regulates

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and directs his passions, but he does not try to destroy them. These are a necessity of our nature, like hunger and thirst and sleep. They are a gift of God; unrestrained they lead to destruction, rightly regulated they are a means and an aid to virtue. Take away hope and love, piety and emulation, fear and courage, and there will be no longer zeal in well-doing, or self-oblation, or heroism; there will be no longer art or poetry or eloquence, all will languish and man will be destitute of warmth, life and energy. But the passions, you urge, are turbulent, impetuous and disorderly; they intoxicate the senses, disturb the reason and render doubtful the issue of the struggle. Granted; but when you have a spirited horse you do not beat him, you study to moderate and regulate his impetuosity. An ardent soul is a danger, but an apathetic soul is next to none at all. Throw yourself, then, generously into the conflict; keep close to your Leader, He will protect you, He will direct your thrusts. When you fight by His side victory is certain, and for every victory you gain He will give you an added crown.

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CHAPTER II.

REWARD OF VICTORY.

THE priest who follows faithfully in the footsteps of his Leader will taste that peace of heart, that joy of a good conscience which the Son of God came to bring on earth to men of good will: *And on earth peace to men of good will.*[1] This is his reward on earth.

In heaven his reward will be a participation in the joy and happiness of Jesus Christ triumphant and reigning in glory, and this reward will be in proportion to the share he has taken in the fatigues of Jesus Christ by laboring, suffering and dying for the salvation of his brethren.

When a priest is completely under the guidance of the new life in Jesus Christ, then is he placed in his true relations to himself, to God and to all creatures.

To himself. Once the body is subdued by mortification, and the senses are subjugated to the reason, the intellect will direct all the thoughts of the soul, the heart all its affections, and the will all its powers towards the object for which they were created. The greater the contradiction, turbulence and antagonism among the faculties and powers of the soul, the greater also will be the assurance that they have resumed their

[1] Luke ii. 14.

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true functions, and that they are simultaneously going forward to the end for which they were intended; equilibrium will be established and there will be calm, agreement and harmony.

To God. When the soul has gone through trials and is purified; when it has shaken off the blight of self-love, it passes into intimate union with the Supreme Good; the human will is grafted into and nourished by the divine will; all its conscious movements come from God, are produced by God, and it tranquilly reposes in God. Then it can say with our Saviour: *My will is to do the will of Him who sent Me.*[1]

To all creatures. In the measure in which man approaches God, in the same measure does he renew the primitive bond uniting him with all earthly creatures. Man marks the boundary-line separating the material from the intellectual life. In him the material ends and the intellectual begins. He is the highest point in the natural world, the lowest in the supernatural. He was created to be the link which unites these two worlds, the point of contact between them. By sin he lost the sense or faculty which enabled him to hold communication with the supernatural world and gave him dominion over the natural. This faculty was restored to him through the mediation of Jesus Christ, but only in the measure in which God in His wisdom determines, and this measure ordinarily depends on the degree of purity which a just soul has acquired.

Does not history tell us that there were Saints, while

[1] John iv. 34.

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still in this mortal body, whose conversation was in heaven, and who, while still abiding on earth, elicited from those who approached them, and even from dumb beasts, expressions and tokens of respect and reverence? The world was at peace with them and they with the world, because they had vanquished sin and reestablished in their souls original purity. The gift of miracles, which has never departed from the Church, what is it but the original dominion of man over the elements and over nature, granted on occasions to certain privileged souls? And may it not be said that these great Saints, whose lives were but one continuous succession of marvels, dwelt in the midst of creation as Adam in his innocence dwelt in Paradise? Their history reads like a leaf from the annals of the human race before the fall, before man had forfeited his dominion over animals, his title of high-priest of creation and mediator between two worlds.

Still the gift of miracles is not a necessary condition of sanctity: Jesus Christ has not promised it to all who live in His friendship; it is not the reward of all His followers.

The temporal reward of sanctity is peace of heart and the interior joy of a good conscience. These are, as it were, the aureole of happiness.

This peace is unknown to sinners, to the vain and the deceitful. The man who departs from God wanders into a desert of want and sorrow, where he finds only the tyranny of passion, disillusions, error and the bitterness of regret.

Have you ever thought of the strange phenomenon

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presented by society in our day? When as now were men ever so given to the enjoyments of this world? Were ever so many shrines set up and dedicated to pleasure? And withal was life ever so wretched and unhappy? Whence comes this? The reason is not far to seek. It is because God is thrust out from the feasts and diversions of the worldly. It is because the amusements and recreations sought by the worldly are such as the virtuous must reprove and condemn. Pleasure has lost that gracious charm, that grateful aroma which gladdens the heart and sweetens life, and what is now called pleasure is but a vulgar gratification of the senses, a sensuality that corrupts the heart and defiles and degrades our being. Sinners indulge themselves after the manner of brute beasts and call it enjoyment. Of true enjoyment, the enjoyment of the innocent and pure of heart, they have no conception. The demon of unrest presides at all their feasts, excitement pervades the atmosphere and the end is satiety, weariness and disgust.

But when our will is completely subjected and obedient to the will of God we experience within us a sweet calm and serene peace which is the tranquillity of a well-ordered conscience. Hence the first-fruit of victory over the passions is a delightful peace which fills the soul and manifests itself exteriorly in a gracious manner and a cheerful deportment.

This holy joy does not consist, as the world fancies, in thoughtless gayety, or in grotesque buffoonery, or in the immoderate hilarity that dissipates the mind and hardens the heart. It is, on the contrary, a joy placid

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and pure, the witness of a good conscience, and it gives a delightful flavor to the intercourse of life, a charm to its amenities and makes virtue lovable and attractive.

Nothing could be more sweet and delightful than to converse with St. Francis de Sales, and St. Vincent used to say: My God, how very sweet Thou must be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good! St. Teresa, in spite of her austere life and her habit of profound recollection, used always to appear radiant with joy and supremely happy. A good religious was once asked how in the midst of so many weighty affairs, of occupations so engrossing and trials so harassing, he preserved his equanimity of temper and placidity of countenance, seemingly always contented and at peace. He answered: Because no one can rob my heart of Jesus Christ: *Christum a me tollere nemo potest.*

And be assured if we abide with God, God will abide with us. Who then can rob us of our peace? Though men fume and fret and the elements be at war; though the earth sink under our feet and the heavens come down upon our heads, we shall still be safe, because our abode is in the bosom of Him whom neither the passions of men nor the convulsions of empires can reach.

Look after My interests, said our Lord to St. Teresa, and I will take care of thine. God will never be outdone in generosity by His creatures.

Look at that faithful priest who sets no bounds to his generosity. The Lord looks upon him lovingly, shadows him with His wings, protects and sustains

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him, inundates him with His graces. It looks as if He were indifferent to every one else, and that this privileged soul were the one object of His solicitude and tender love.

Blessed Angels, tell me, when day by day you go up from earth to heaven and with reverent fear present yourselves before the Most High, what does He inquire about, of what does He ask you to give an account? Does He inquire about the bold enterprises, the vast undertakings, the political revolutions, the conquests, the achievements that engage the attention and harass the lives of mortals here below? No, in the sight of God the earth is as a grain of sand, and all the ambitious dwelling thereon are as so many insects pushing and jostling one another in their feverish anxiety, the one to gain an advantage over the other, until death shall come to reduce them to dust, or until God shall break them as an earthen vessel in the day of His wrath: *The Lord hath broken kings in the day of His wrath.*[1]

All the elect of God are very dear to His heart, but more pleasing to Him than even these is the holy Priest who earnestly labors to augment their number and to perfect them in virtue. When the Angels, those ministering spirits of God, after having gone up and down through the world, return to heaven and appear before the Lord to give an account of their mission, He inquires particularly after the pious coworker and excellent pastor, who is laboring with indefatigable zeal in his parish, teaching the young their catechism,

[1] Psal. cix. 5.

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visiting the poor and the sick, consoling the sorrowful and afflicted and everywhere inspiring and promoting piety. And I will make bold to say that the Lord inquires with something akin to anxiety after this good priest, as He did in the case of Job: *Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and fearing God?*[1]

And yet the destiny of this faithful minister of the Gospel, so great in the sight of God and so highly honored, is but beginning here on earth and will be completed only in heaven. The crown which the Just Judge will place upon his brow will be more precious than that of solitary or anchoret or contemplative, for he was not content to go to heaven by himself; he wished to bring with him all his brethren, and he spared neither time nor toil to open to them its gates. St. Jerome says that such a one shall be as a brightness in the firmament; and the Holy Ghost said the same, and added still more explicitly that he shall shine as a star for all eternity: *They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many unto justice, as the stars for all eternity.*[2]

Who can form an idea of this flood of glory and happiness? We shall try to give a faint and imperfect notion of it in the following Section.

An Edifying Story.

How fortunate we shall be if, after having meditated on the life and example of our Lord and trodden in

[1] Job i. 8. [2] Dan. xii. 13.

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His footsteps, we shall be able to end our lives as did the gentleman of whom St. Francis de Sales speaks in the Seventh Book of his "*Treatise on the Love of God*"! This is in substance the story as told by the Bishop of Geneva with that ingenuous simplicity and indescribable charm so admired in his writings.

An illustrious and virtuous Knight once went to Palestine to visit the holy places where our Lord wrought the works of our redemption; and to worthily prepare himself for so holy an enterprise he began by going to Confession and devoutly receiving Holy Communion. He first went to Nazareth, where the Angel had announced the Incarnation to the Blessed Virgin and where the Eternal Word was made Flesh. There the pious Pilgrim set himself to meditate on the abyss of the goodness of the Son of God, who graciously deigned to become man to save man from being eternally lost. He passed thence to Bethlehem, the scene of the Nativity, where he shed countless tears in contemplating the tears with which the Son of God, the Virgin's child, had bathed the Holy Manger, kissing and rekissing the hallowed earth and lapping up the dust once touched in infancy by the Divine Babe.

From Bethlehem he went to Bethabara, and thence passed over to the village of Bethany, where, remembering that our Lord had there stripped Himself to receive Baptism, he also stripped and, while going down into the Jordan and coming up again and drinking of those waters, fancied that he saw his Saviour in the act of being baptized by the hand of the Precursor, and the Holy Ghost coming down upon Him in visible form

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as a dove, and that the Heavens were opened and he heard the voice of the Father saying: *This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

From Bethany he withdrew into the desert, where in spirit he saw his Saviour fasting, struggling with and overcoming the tempter; and then he saw Angels coming and ministering unto Him.

From thence he went to Thabor and beheld his Saviour transfigured, and then going up to Jerusalem he pictured Him on His knees washing His Disciples' feet and straightway distributing to them His Body. He crossed the brook of Cedron and turned to the Garden of Gethsemani, where his heart was filled with tears of grief as he represented to himself his Beloved Saviour sweating blood because of the intensity of the agony through which He passed. He next beheld Him seized and bound and led up to Jerusalem, whither he also set out, walking the whole way in the footsteps of his beloved Jesus, and in spirit he saw Him dragged backwards and forwards from Annas to Caiphas, from Pilate to Herod, beaten and mocked, scourged and crowned with thorns, presented to the people, condemned to death and loaded with and carrying His Cross; he saw also the meeting of Jesus with His afflicted Mother and the women of Jerusalem weeping over Him.

Finally, this devout pilgrim went up to Mt. Calvary, where, as in vision, he saw the cross lying on the ground, his naked Lord stretched upon it, and His hands and feet nailed to it. He never took his eyes off Him, gazing upon Him while He was being lifted

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up and the blood flowed in streams from every part of His suspended body. He looked upon the Blessed Virgin, whom a sword of grief had pierced, and then upon his crucified Saviour. He heard Him utter His seven last words, those tokens of incomparable love; and at last he saw Him die, pierced with a lance, revealing through the opening of the wound His divine Heart. Withdrawing from the Cross, he betook himself to the sepulchre, following the dead body of his Lord, and bathing with countless tears the spots purpled with His blood. Arriving there, he entered into the tomb and buried his heart by the side of his Saviour's body. Then, rising with Him, he went to Emmaus and observed all that took place between Him and the two Disciples, and finally, returning and going up to Mt. Olivet, whence our Lord took leave of His Disciples and ascended up on high, he there contemplated the two impressions of his divine Saviour's feet and the ground where He had stood, and, lying prone upon it, he kissed it over and over again with yearnings and sighs of infinite love. Like an archer drawing the string of his bow when about to shoot an arrow, he gathered up and concentrated within himself at that supreme moment all the strength and intensity of his affections, and then, raising his eyes and lifting his hands to heaven, he cried out: O Jesus, sweet Jesus, I know not now where to seek Thee or whither to follow Thee on this earth. Ah, Jesus, my Love, grant that this heart may go after Thee, that it may lift itself up and come to Thee. With these words his soul went forth from his body and sped away to heaven, as an

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arrow shot by a divine archer at the object he most dearly loved.

His companions and servants, seeing this devoted soul fall suddenly as if dead, were frightened and, thinking it an accident, hastened away to call a physician, who, when he was come, found that he was really dead. Wishing, however, to know the cause of so sudden a taking-off, the physician asked about the constitution, the habits and the general health of the dead man. Learning that he was a man of even temper, sweet disposition, extremely devout, and that he loved God intensely, he said that his heart must have broken from the very excess of its ardent love. To verify the truth of his judgment he opened the body and found the heart rent asunder and these words impressed upon the flesh within: *Jesus, my love.*

Love, then, in this heart discharged the office of death, and without the intervention of any other cause separated the soul from the body. These facts were first narrated by St. Bernardine of Sienna, a most saintly and learned writer, in the first of his sermons on the Assumption.

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Section Second.

Rewards of Eternity.

CHAPTER I.

REWARDS COMMON TO ALL DISCIPLES.

WHEN St. Thomas of Aquinas was one day at prayer, our Lord appeared to him and said: Thomas, thou hast written magnificently in My praise; what reward dost thou ask? None other than Thyself, O Lord, the saint replied.

To the same question you, a priest, would give, I am confident, the same answer. On the day on which you first entered into the militia of the Sanctuary you said to God: Lord, Thou art my portion and my heritage forever: *Tu es qui restitues hæreditatem meam mihi.* You wished to share with Jesus Christ His dangers and trials in order one day to share with Him the fruits of His victory. Now, what are these fruits? After the terrible battle and glorious victory of Calvary it was said of the Victor: *He ascendeth into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. Of His kingdom there shall be no end.*

This is also the reward promised to every faithful priest after he has generously fought the good fight.

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First, a triumphant entry into heaven: *Ascendit in cœlum;* next, the sweet repose after victory: *Sedet;* next, a participation in the happiness of God Himself: *Ad dexteram Patris;* and, finally, all this forever and ever: *Regni ejus non erit finis.*

Triumphant Entry into Heaven.

In the course of the ten or twenty or more years of your priesthood you have gone through many struggles and borne up under many trials and contradictions; but now at last the conflict is at an end. You are told that your redemption is at hand, and your soul, putting off the bonds of earth, quits its prison of clay.

Your Angel Guardian, who has been waiting this happy moment, gives you the kiss of peace. Man of God, he says, follow me, I will lead you to your true home, and, taking flight, he bears you up on high.

Look down for the last time upon the earth which has been so long the theatre of your combats and which you so often bathed with tears. Alas! you leave there your brethren to struggle with the enemy and exposed to countless dangers. May they also like you come out of the conflict triumphant and glorious! Passing through vast spaces, you go up and up. Before you are the spheres where the stars follow one another in their courses; beyond is the Empyrean Heaven, the city of the Living God, compassed round about with a wall more transparent and brilliant than crystal and luminous within with the Sun of Justice whose rays inundate the vast enclosure and fill it with brightness and splendor.

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Your coming is announced, and all heaven rejoices. The conversion of a sinner is celebrated with gladness in heaven, but the final victory, the triumph, the crowning of an apostolic man, is a solemnity, a great solemnity for Angels and Saints.

You have scarcely set foot on the confines of the heavenly Kingdom and already everything is commotion. Your patron Saints, your kindred, your friends hasten to welcome you. All those souls who, through your ministry, were born again in Jesus Christ; the sinners whom you converted, the just whom you sanctified, all sing canticles of joy in your honor, saying: *Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord.*[1] He is indeed a representative worthy of the Man-God. After the example of his Maker he went up and down the earth doing good: *Who went about doing good.*[2] To him I owe my salvation; I was leading a disorderly life, and was brought back to the practice of virtue by his holy words and fervent prayer. To him was due my progress in perfection; his wise words of counsel and still more potent example roused me from my lethargy and inspired in me a zeal for well-doing. Lord, set upon the head of this holy priest as many crowns as he has saved souls, or as the virtues he practised or brought others to practise.

In the midst of these felicitations and transports of gladness and surrounded by this brilliant cortège of Saints you arrive at the palace of the Great Monarch. The doors are thrown open; what an august and startling spectacle! This is the home of the Living God;

[1] Matt. xxi. 9. [2] Acts x. 38.

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here He dwells whom neither the earth nor the heavens can contain. Refulgent thrones are set up round about the amphitheatre for the Angels and Saints who make up His court. Yonder, resplendent as the stars in the firmament, are the venerable Patriarchs who were as the dawn before the coming of the day and who in their persons were types of Jesus Christ and His Church. Yonder are the immortal Prophets whose voices were as a trumpet-note coming down across the centuries and whose oracles were messages of joy and hope in every age. Yonder are the glorious Apostles who bore the good tidings to all men and who, while with one hand they cast down idols, with the other bore the standard of the Cross in triumph to the ends of the earth. Yonder are those invincible Martyrs who spurned suffering and despised death and who, all radiant with glory and filled with transports of joy, lay upon the Altar of the Lamb their palm branches still crimsoned with their blood. Yonder are the illustrious Pontiffs, still the invisible mediators between earth and heaven, bowing down before the true Melchisedec and laying at His feet their censers and their tiaras. Yonder are those Doctors of the Church who were enlightened from above and who now lay their pens of gold upon the Book which had been so often unsealed before them. Yonder are those troops of Virgins, the spouses of the Lamb, who follow whithersoever He goeth, singing the song that only they can sing. Yonder are the countless Cherubim, all resplendent with brightness, and the Seraphim, burning with love, standing in reverent attitude and ready at a beck from the King

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of the heavens to hasten upon wings of light from sphere to sphere.

And high above all the celestial hierarchies in this magnificent Empire, looking graciously and serenely down upon Angels and Saints, and entrancing all by the majesty and sweetness of Her presence, is throned the Immaculate Daughter of Adam, the Virgin Mother of the Redeemer.

In a region infinitely above all these, at the right hand of His Father, the Word Incarnate continues His great office of Mediator and Pontiff of creation, receives the adoration and praises of earth and heaven, sanctifying and making them divine by taking them into His Heart, and then offering them to the Most Blessed Trinity, the one centre to which all things return as to an ocean of infinite Love.

And to you, O Priest, to you, whose august ministry of the priesthood is forever at an end, to you, who have led a worthy life in keeping with the dignity of your sublime office; to you Jesus Christ will say: Come, I recognize you as one of Mine; come, enter into the joy of your God. And addressing His Father, He will say: Father of Sanctity, here is one whom Thou didst give Me, whom I associated with Myself in My priesthood; he has glorified Me among men, and since he has shared in the toil of My mission I wish that he may also participate in the glory of My triumph.

What a change, what an unexpected revolution. Can you, a simple and modest man, realize where you are? Only yesterday the dignity of Pontiffs and the majesty of Kings dazzled you, and you looked with

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reverent awe upon the pomp and circumstance that hedged them about. Can you now realize where you are? You lift up your eyes, but you no longer see before you an earthly monarch.

You see Him whose throne is the Cherubim, who dwells in light inaccessible; you see an abyss of splendor and a fountain of glory; you see Him who, being sufficient for Himself, was for all eternity unknown to every created intelligence; who was not less happy because He was alone, and not less glorious because He was hidden; who is the universal beatitude of all creatures; who gives being and life and strength to all and is beholden to none; who is at one and the same time nearest and most distant; who dwells in every place and is confined by none; who has immensity without extension, and eternity without duration; who endures and yet has neither succession nor term.

Infinity separates Him from everything that is not He. All other beings are created, He alone is uncreated; everything else is dependent, He alone is absolute; everything else is fleeting and perishable, He alone is immortal; everything else is finite and limited, He alone is without bound or limit; everything else is defective and subject to change, He alone is changeless and perfect.

He is nothing of whatever exists outside Him, and yet in seeing Him you see all things, because He contains eminently in Himself all the perfections that are diffused and disseminated among creatures. He is not sun or star, flower or fountain, nourishment or harmony, and yet in Him is all the glory of the sun, the brilliancy

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of the stars, the enchanting beauty of the azure sky, the brightness of the flowers, the cooling freshness of the waters, the nourishment of elements and plants, the rapture and ecstasy of music. You see in Him beauty without blemish, goodness without weakness, power peerless and unrivalled, and life that knows not death; in a word, *you see Him as He is*.

You will fall prostrate, you will annihilate yourself before this Supreme Majesty, repeating the canticle: *Holy, holy, holy;* or rather you will adore in silence: *Tibi silentium laus*.

The Creator, the Supreme Ruler of the World, will say to you: Arise, My son, you have fought the good fight; receive the crown of the just; and Jesus, taking it, will place it upon your head, He will clothe you again with the insignia of the royal priesthood and place you upon the throne that has been prepared for you from all eternity.

Delicious Repose.

Then you shall enjoy the fruits of your victories; then you shall always taste ever new delights; then you will bless the crosses, the sufferings, the afflictions which were so severe a trial to you during your pilgrimage on earth. Where are now the fasts, the vigils, the scourgings of the flesh with which you killed the old man within you? These are but as a dream. Where are now the fatigues, the labors, the gainsayings and the humiliations which you experienced during your apostolic life? All these are now but a memory,

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a memory sweet to dwell upon and filling your soul with gratitude. Where are now the wounds you received in those terrific conflicts you were obliged to wage against the world and the devil? Nothing remains of them but the scars, which are badges of honor; there is no longer care or restlessness, toil or trial; no longer any other ministry or office except that of loving. Charity is the only virtue which is exercised in heaven, and its activity is repose. Its activity consists in loving what it sees, its repose in possessing what it loves, its happiness in knowing that it can never lose what it possesses.

After thousands of centuries your joy will be as fresh and young, your love as ardent, as pure and as delicious as it was the first instant, because the object of your joy and love will be a beauty ever ancient and ever new.

That immense, that infinite felicity for which man is always yearning, which he seeks in all creatures, of which he is ever dreaming, you will possess to the full, and you now enjoy it in the bosom of God.

For what is perfect felicity? It is the satisfying of all the longings and desires of our being, or, in other words, it is to rest securely in the fruition of all good. And is not this precisely what constitutes the felicity of heaven? There by means of the beatific vision you possess all the intellect craves; by your intimate union with the Supreme Good you have all the heart desires; and the certainty that you will never lose this unspeakable felicity completes it and is its crown: *And of His Kingdom there shall be no end.*

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Satiety of Mind.

How is it possible to form an idea of the expansion which the sight and contemplation of the Infinite Being will produce in the intellect? The discovery of a new, prolific and far-reaching idea in metaphysics or morals or other science so widens the reach of our intellectual grasp that we blush at the meagreness of the knowledge we before possessed. Now, if these faint flickerings of truth scattered here and there through the darkness of the world so marvellously enrich minds which set themselves to discover them and make them their own, fancy, if you can, how these same minds will be broadened and deepened when they behold limitless and infinite truth revealed to them without veil or shadow.

Once God is known and contemplated face to face mysteries cease, curtains are rent, and you drink in knowledge at its source, because the last word of science is God. Then you understand all the dogmas of religion which now you believe, of which indeed you are certain, but which you do not comprehend.

What are the mysteries of Christianity? They are the answer of God to the questions which torment mankind. We wish to know the origin and end of all creatures; what we are to believe in regard to God, the soul and the life to come.

For four thousand years the human mind was engaged to no purpose on these formidable problems, and it would be still vexed with them and toiling in vain had not the Son of God come down from heaven

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to solve them and bring new questions into the intellectual world. He came to solve old questions, but to solve them in the way best suited to our state of imperfection and trial.

One dark night a pilot lost his bearings on the ocean. Suddenly he saw the light of the lighthouse shining brightly on the distant coast. He knew the channel and steered his vessel in that direction. He got safe into harbor and rested secure, waiting for the sun to rise above the horizon in order to gaze at leisure upon the beauties of the country and the magnificence of the city.

Similarly faith is not a luminous vision, it is not like the sun at midday; it is, however, a beacon, a torch diffusing light about through the encompassing darkness. It banishes doubt and is a stay to our feeble reason, which it strengthens, giving it as a foundation the word of God. Truth is yonder; you are in port; be tranquil; you do not yet comprehend, but you will by and bye.

Now that the great day of eternity has dawned upon your intellect, O Priest of God, you see light within light: *And in Thy light we shall see light.*[1] You have the solution of all enigmas, the explanation of all mysteries. One God in three equal Persons, God incarnate, God in the manger, God on the Cross, God on the Altar, all these adorable scandals of the Christian faith are to you now only amazing and entrancing spectacles. Having entered into the might of the Lord, having reached those depths where God

[1] Psal. xxxv. 10.

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dwells in the midst of His mysteries and His majesty, you behold the brightness of the great, the immortal day; the bands have been removed from your eyes, and faith has passed into luminous vision: *You see Him as He is.*

Satiety of the Heart.

When you were in the world you loved God because you were a priest after His heart. But how did you love Him? You loved Him feebly, languidly and imperfectly; you had a thousand little attachments to persons and things. These you lamented; you sighed and wept in thinking of them. Now that you are in the presence of God and ravished by His love, your thoughts and affections never stray away to any other object. You are hidden away and buried in His heart, and drink in life and love from His bosom; your thirst, ever quenched and ever importunate, is satiated with new and ineffable delights, and your happiness is ever becoming more chastened and perfect. You can now fathom the meaning of the mysterious words: *I am thy reward exceeding great.*[1] You have given yourself wholly to God; He gives Himself wholly to you. You have no longer to be content as formerly with His reflected rays streaming down upon your countenance, or with graces stealing into your heart; now you are filled with God Himself, His substance and His life. He penetrates your whole being through and through, you are luminous with His glory, living in His life. Your happiness is the happiness of God Himself.

[1] Gen. xv. 1.

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Rejoice and be glad in the possession of your blessedness forever and ever. Centuries will come and centuries will go and you will always be happy with your God: *So shall we always be with the Lord.*[1] Men will go on chasing fleeting pleasures, baubles and empty honors; they will fret their lives away with vanities, and you will shine as a star set in glory; you will drink of torrents of delight; you will live in one endless ecstasy, in one ever-renewing gladness, singing ceaselessly: *O amor quid tibi tribuam, qui me fecisti divinum, qui lutum in Deum transfigurasti.*[2]

[1] I. Thessal. iv. 16. [2] St. Bonav.

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CHAPTER II.

CONDITIONS OF THE CONFLICT.

THE possession and the enjoyment of the Supreme Good in Heaven is a heritage bequeathed us by Jesus Christ, a conquest made by His death and offered to all men, but on certain conditions. The happiness of heaven is certainly a gift and a grace, since all the efforts of a creature could not merit it: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.*[1] But it is also the recompense and reward of fidelity and generosity in this life of trial. God, says St. Augustine, created us without our consent, but He will not save us without our cooperation. He did not wish to take us straight to His Kingdom, as brands snatched from the burning. To so liberate us would not be in keeping with the attributes of God, who would then derive little glory from our ransom, or with the dignity of man, who would thus obtain salvation without having done anything to merit it. Moreover, we should be entirely passive as regards our eternal destiny, submissive to God by a sort of fatality, obeying Him as do the sun and the stars. Having been reestablished in

[1] Rom. viii. 18.

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the supernatural life, we must work concurrently with our Redeemer to preserve this life in ourselves, to develop and perfect it. We must therefore endure struggles and bear up against them, so that the glory awaiting us in heaven may be at once both the gift of divine liberality and the recompense of our efforts.

These conditions are the same for all, whether priest or layman. No one will be crowned who has not fought and conquered: *To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with Me in My Throne.*[1]

Who will find fault with these conditions or think them hard? Why should any one do so? Do not the workman and the merchant labor for years in the hope of making a fortune? Does not the student spend sleepless nights and shorten his life in seeking knowledge? Does not the statesman sacrifice ease and peace of mind in his ambition to obtain office and position? Does not the soldier expose his life on the field of battle for glory? Is it too much, then, to make some little sacrifice, to undergo hardship and bear up under the trials of a day in order to gain an eternity of heaven? The very thought of the happiness of the life to come so fired the Apostles that they did not hesitate to forsake home and country, face fire and sword and pour out the last drop of their blood. The martyrs too, with equal alacrity, suffered every species of torture which human ingenuity could devise or satanic malice invent. Even in our own day men of apostolic mould cross seas, taking no thought of the perils of the deep, only to encounter still greater

[1] Apoc. iii. 21.

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dangers among barbarous peoples and to bathe those distant lands with their sweat and blood.

Happy are they who are given the grace to accomplish these great things and who, treading in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, fight thus valiantly in the cause of their King. Happy the priest who, by sacrifices so generous and virtues so magnanimous, gains heaven so soon and after so brief and glorious a struggle.

But in an army of soldiers all cannot be heroes, nor can all distinguish themselves by prodigies of valor. Even he who stands guard and remains faithful at his post, or he who unobserved combats bravely in the thick of the fight, never turning his back to the foe, contributes to success and victory and is entitled to his reward. Who then may hope for a place in the abode of glory? *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, who shall stand in the holy place?*[1]

The pious and fervent priest will go there; he who takes what he can from nature and the needs of the body in order to give himself to meditation on the eternal truths and to works of charity; he whom neither the seductions of the world, nor the example of a lax brother priest, nor the threats and persecutions of the impious and the profligate can move one hair-breadth from the path of duty; he who is a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God and leads an innocent and pure life in the midst of his people; he who is innocent of hand and clean of heart, he will go there.

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? The priest who keeps intact and faithfully transmits to

[1] Psal. xxiii. 3.

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his flock the deposit of faith and morals: *quæcumque vera;* the priest who bears upon his countenance the holy modesty and priestly gravity which make religion respected even by those who love it not: *quæcumque pudica;* the priest who is so orderly in the discharge of his duties and functions that all clearly see he is guided by the spirit of prudence and charity and that he is disinterested and just: *quæcumque justa;* the priest who appears at the foot of the Altar, as the Elders before the throne of the Lamb, conscious of the Majesty of God who dwells there, and who by the modest and recollected mien with which he celebrates the Divine Mysteries teaches the faithful with what holy dispositions they should assist at them: *quæcumque sancta;* the priest who makes himself agreeable to the people, not by an unbecoming familiarity, but by a gracious and affectionate condescension, gaining their hearts, and thus drawing them to Jesus Christ: *quæcumque amabilia;* the priest who makes his ministry successful, not so much by the eloquence of his discourses as by the fragrance of his virtues: *quæcumque bonæ famæ,*—for such a priest, fashioned after the heart of God, a throne has been prepared from all eternity in heaven: *Innocent of hand and pure of heart.*

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? I shall go there if I do all this, if I fight on to the end against the world and the devil, if I dedicate myself without reserve to the glory of God and the saving of my brethren; then shall I go up to the Holy Mount, I shall see the King of Glory in the splendor of His

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Majesty, I shall be inebriated with the torrents of His delight. O happy day on which this new life shall open upon me, day of gladness, day of triumph! The thought seizes me, takes possession of me and carries me out of myself. I feel as if in another world. Is it heaven, the dwelling-place of peace and the home of my eternal rest?

Alas, no; the time has not yet come, my victory is not yet complete, the enemy is still before me. I must again take up my Cross and go forth to battle. Lord, be the stay and support of Thy soldier. Mary, protect thy son. Still a few hours of suffering, still a few more acts of determined bravery and then rest, glory and happiness without end: *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulations worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*[1]

[1] II. Cor. iv. 17.

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CHAPTER III.

THE SPECIAL GLORY OF PRIESTS AND PASTORS IN HEAVEN.

THE essential happiness of the saints in heaven is the beatific vision, the never-ending presence of God in glory. The Omnipotent communicates Himself to the elect, to each in the measure of his merits and capacity: *In hac vita nobis est discretio operum*, says St. Gregory the Great, *erit in illa procul dubio discretio dignitatum, ut quo hic alius alium merito superat, illic alius alium retributione transcendat.*[1]

Over and above the substantial happiness common to all Saints, some, because of certain virtues for which they were conspicuous, or because of certain extraordinary merits which distinguished them, will enjoy an added accidental happiness, and these constitute an order apart in the celestial hierarchies.

To the priest, to the pastor of souls God promises these two kinds of accidental glory in Heaven:

1st. He will enjoy more abundantly than others the substantial glory common to all the blessed.

2d. He will also share in the accidental glory special to privileged classes of the elect.

[1] Mor. IV. cap. Ult.

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I.

The union of Christians with the Word-made-Flesh, their likeness more or less perfect to the Divine Mediator, gives them a legitimate right to the celestial inheritance: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son.*[1]

This premised, I say that the priest, because he is a priest and pastor of souls, should have a larger share in the substantial happiness of heaven than that which is common to other Christians; that is, he should be more intimately united with the Supreme Good for all eternity, as compared with the just who on earth did not excel him in heroic virtues.

These claims of the priest are supported by three reasons:

1st. The priest, by the very fact of his priesthood, has more intimate relations with Jesus Christ than the ordinary faithful enjoy. They are His brethren and members of His mystical body, having been made so by baptism. The priest is all this, and in addition he is His minister, His representative, His coworker, another self; he discharges with Christ the functions of the head of the body, diffusing life throughout the members.

The faithful partake of the Body and Blood of the Saviour and receive from time to time this pledge of everlasting union with God. The priest receives this same pledge daily, and also brings down from heaven the spotless Lamb, distributes It to the faithful, offers

[1] Rom. viii. 29.

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It up to the divine Majesty, and is one with the Eternal High-priest and Pontiff: *Os tuum, os Christi.*

2d. The priest is a closer imitator of the virtues of the Man-God than is the ordinary Christian. Every Christian renounces all inordinate affection for the goods of this earth; the priest shuts out, or should do so, even the temptation to such an affection by barring all the avenues that lead to worldly wealth. The Christian renounces all indecent and shameless pleasures, the priest renounces even lawful pleasures by his vow of perpetual chastity. The Christian renounces pride, which aspires to dominion and empire over his fellow men; the priest gives up his own will by submitting himself to the authority of his ecclesiastical Superiors and making himself the servant of all to gain all to Christ.

3d. The priest contributes more directly and more efficaciously to the glory of God than does the ordinary Christian. Christians in adoring and serving God have only themselves in view or their immediate interests; the priest goes beyond this; he toils, spends and is spent to gain adorers to God. Christians follow Christ up the narrow road; the priest guides them, leads them on, points out the way and clears their path of obstacles. Christians are a vast body of subjects who obey the immortal King of the ages; the priest is in the midst of them, transmitting the orders of his Sovereign and seeing that they are executed.

In this way the good works and the virtues of the faithful are largely due to the priest; they are the fruit of his prayers, his exhortations and his zeal; to him

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then belongs the chief merit, and to him will be given a special recompense: *Qui solicitudines omnium portat*, says St. Prosper, *illis proficientibus proficit, et gloria illorum, gloria illius est.*

St. Cyprian had not yet shed his blood for the name of Christ, and yet he was the father of a multitude of martyrs, whose generosity and ardor he inflamed by the fire of his divine eloquence, and who, strengthened by his words, were victorious over tyrants. Two of them wrote to him from their prison: God will give thee that which we owe to thy zeal, and He will reward thee for all we have borne in this cruel persecution. If we have stood firm in the presence of the enemy, the merit is thine; without thy powerful words of exhortation, we might have gone down before the fury of the storm. Thou, who hast so energetically preached patience, hast no less merit than we, who have practised it. If we hope for much glory for having followed thy wise and salutary counsel, thou wilt not have less glory for having given us such counsel: *Reddet tibi Dominus pro ista tua charitate mercedem. Non minus enim corona dignus est qui hortatus est, quam qui passus est; non minus laude condignus est qui docuit quam qui et fecit; non minus honorandus qui monuit, quam qui dimicavit.*[1]

And what will this blessedness be? David when setting out to fight against Goliath said: *What shall be given to the man that shall kill this Philistine?*[2] And what will be given him who gave encouragement and support to the soldiers of Jesus Christ in their

[1] St. Cyprian Epist. 26. [2] I. Kings xvii. 26.

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struggle against the devil, and who by teaching and example taught them to overcome the enemy of God and man? God will not stop with admitting him into His Kingdom, *He will place him over all His goods;*[1] He will assign him a place apart; He will set him upon a throne in the midst of the princes of His Court.

In a word, over and above the substantial blessedness common to all the Saints the priest will enjoy a special blessedness and share in the accidental glory reserved for a particular order of the elect.

II.

The Church, in the veneration and devotion which she gives the Blessed, distinguishes them into three classes, accordingly as they hold a conspicuous place in heaven and enjoy some accidental blessedness. This special blessedness doubtless consists in a more abundant joy, in a special sweetness divinely poured out upon them and flooding their souls, and in a more resplendent glory which will radiate from their bodies and be their prerogatives after the universal resurrection.

1. We saw in a preceding Consideration that the exercise of the pastoral ministry might be fittingly called one long martyrdom. Three things are necessary to constitute a martyr, namely, the will, the cause and the pain.

A pastor has always a martyr's *will*. He is ever ready to lay down his life for the flock committed to his care. If this heroic disposition is not habitual in

[1] Matt. xxiv. 47.

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his heart, if he shrinks from a difficult duty even with death staring him in the face, he certainly does not rise to the high standard of his ministry, he is a mercenary and not a true shepherd of his flock. According to St. John Chrysostom, who in this only interprets the saying of our Lord, this readiness to sacrifice all personal interests, to take no thought of self, and even to give one's life for the salvation of souls, is the characteristic which distinguishes a true from a false shepherd: *Hic propriam, contemptis ovibus, ille, suis contemptis, ovium salutem curat.*

The *cause* or motive which makes suffering unto blood and death specifically martyrdom is never absent from the life of a true pastor. To suffer for the sake of souls that have gone astray, or in defence of the violated rights of the Church, is not this to labor for the same interests, to toil for the same object, for which martyrs confessed the faith before tyrants? Were not St. John the Baptist, who reproved the incestuous Herod for his sins, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, who defended the immunities of the Church against a wicked monarch, both equally honored with a martyr's crown?

Is not the *pain* or suffering which every true pastor must endure in the fulfilment of his duty a severe trial? Nay, is it not frequently more intolerable than a martyr's suffering? Who would not at times prefer to lay his head on the executioner's block rather than continuously to bear with the calumnies and outrages of wicked men, to whom a pastor must say *non licet*, or than to face the persecutions of the impious and

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unbelievers, against whom an unceasing conflict must be waged in defence of the rights of God and the authority of the Church?

It is for this reason that St. John Chrysostom, in comparing pastors and martyrs, finds a great similarity between them; but he also notes a difference which is very consoling to us and is a pledge of special glory. Martyrs, he says, die only once for Jesus Christ, while the pastor of souls must die daily for his flock: *Martyr semel propter Christum moritur, hic vero millies propter gregem; sic Paulus: quotidie morior propter vestram salutem, fratres.*

2. Those who are destined for the priesthood are very carefully selected. During the perilous years of youth they are kept within the shadow of the Sanctuary and protected against the pestilential atmosphere of vice. Many of these youths bring to their ordination the innocence of baptism, and they then promise to avoid whatever may stain their chastity, which they rightly prize as their most honorable distinction and the most precious ornament of the priesthood. That the priest who continues his whole life faithful to this sacred engagement is entitled to the aureole of virginity there is no doubt.

Even if during early youth this tender and delicate virtue should have lost its lustre, the priest will still share somewhat in the special prerogatives and glory of virgins, provided, by preserving it unsullied during the years of his priesthood, he grows in some sort into the likeness of the chaste spouses of the Lamb: *Those*

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follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. For they are without spot before the throne of God.[1]

3. In heaven there is a special glory for Doctors whose mission on earth has been to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and superstition, to combat error, to unmask heresy, to labor for the triumph of true faith by illuminating it with the clearness of evidence and making it the light of the world: *Ye are the light of the world.*[2]

And is not this precisely what the priest is engaged in doing daily in his parish? He instructs the ignorant, confounds the sophistry of the impious, combats the false maxims of the worldly, nourishes souls with heavenly doctrine, and teaches the people the mysteries of faith and the truths of eternal life. And is not this the chief duty of a true pastor? Should it not be his constant occupation?

Now, the Holy Ghost has said: *They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as the stars for all eternity.*[3]

This is the glory which shall distinguish the priest in heaven who on earth has been a teacher and Doctor in the Church. It is a glory which will carry with it an increase of blessedness. It is a title of honor which will distinguish him from the rest of the blessed, on condition, however, that the holiness of his life shall be in keeping with the august dignity of his ministry.

Now that we have some idea of the magnificence and immensity of the rewards that await us after a few short days of trial and struggle we may cry out with

[1] Apoc. xiv. 4-6. [2] Matt. v. 14. [3] Dan. xii. 3.

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David: *It is good for me to adhere to my God;*[1] or with the Apostle St. Thomas: *Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*[2]

Yes, it is glorious to share the fatigues and dangers of Jesus, our Saviour; it is glorious to make God known to men, to toil for the conversion of sinners, for the perfection of the just and to make conquests the fruits of which will be ours forever. It is glorious to continue the mission of our Divine Redeemer; to be, like Him, the saviour of our brethren, even if, like Him, we should sacrifice this perishable life and end by dying on the cross: *Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*

What a source of comfort and consolation will our sufferings and our labors be to us, whose reward is an eternal rest! How joyous, how much to be envied, will be those reproaches and insults which have been to us the occasion of glory that shall never end! *Ad modicum temporis labor est, et in sæculum sæculi requies erit; mitiga spe laborem, et tribulationes lætitia excipiet.*[3]

Ye men of the world, continue, if you will, in your quest after wealth, honor and pleasure; we shall never be your rivals in that field; we shall never compete with you for such vanities. You rejoice when your names are in the mouths of men, when fame and fortune come to you; when you are raised to office and high position; when you see the world at your feet. Even then we shall say to you: Of what avail is all this?

[1] Psal. lxxii. 28. [2] John xi. 16.
[3] St. John Chrys. Homil 29 ad pop.

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By to-morrow the hand of death may have pulled down this frail edifice of prosperity and greatness, and buried you beneath its ruins. As for us, we aspire after goods more enduring; we believe we were born for greater things. Heaven is our heritage, the earth is not enough for us; it will not satisfy a Christian, much less a priest, to be happy for ten, twenty or fifty years; we long to be forever happy. I paint for eternity, *Æternitati pingo*, said the Pagan artist, and we say the same with much more reason; we toil for eternity; we struggle, we suffer, we spend ourselves and are spent for eternity. Eternity, joyous eternity, this is the great, the only thought that fills the mind and imagination of the truly apostolic man. He must have the Infinite; he must have God Himself with all His glory to fill and satisfy the immensity of his cravings: *I shall be satiated when Thy glory shall appear*.[1]

And ye, men of wrath and violence, ye unbelievers and impious, what good will come of all your alliances and conspiracies? The sight of a priest irritates and angers you; you never leave off persecuting, calumniating and insulting him; you would wish to destroy him and have done with him forever. But what can you do against a man who is not of this world? How can you reach him? Through his goods? They are in heaven and beyond your grasp. Through his body? This is for him but a prison from which he longs to be set free. Through his honor? His honor and glory is to share the ignominy and wear the livery of his Divine Master. Your fury is therefore vain and to no

[1] Psal. xvi. 15.

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purpose. You never can get rid of him; he will outlive your hatred, your contempt and your anathemas; aye, he will outlive yourselves. He who sent him to do His work is more potent than you; you will fall, you will perish, and your name shall be blotted from the memory of men; but the priest will live on; he will continue to preach the truth, to comfort the sorrowful, to save souls and conduct them to their everlasting home.

Go forward, then, ye priests of God, having your hearts filled with confidence and courage; go forward, ye bearers of hope, and comfort; go forward, dispensing blessing and reaping insult, for thus did the Man-God who leads the way before you. His mission was a mystery, it was a folly and a scandal; and yours will not be better understood. The world is ignorant of your purpose and your means of accomplishing it; it aspires only after present good, and its wisdom is the false wisdom of the spirit of the age. But you reach out after invisible goods, and your hope is in the folly of the Cross.

Go forward, then, ye men of the future, ye prophets of eternity; the world may be upheaved and empires overthrown, but you will not be impeded in your mission of peace; generations and kingdoms will pass before you, but you will go on gathering together the children of light and uniting them with the great family of the predestined; and everything else shall be plunged into the open pit below *which is prepared for the devil and his angels*.[1]

[1] Matt. xxv. 41.

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Go forward, O mysterious messengers of the Lord; ye to whom has been committed the duty of protesting in the name of heaven against the scandalous triumphs of error and vice. Teachers of truth, apostles of virtue, dispensers of grace, your mission will not end until the last day of the world, in order that it may be known of all men that the Lord is faithful to His promises. And when time shall have come to an end and the breath of the wrath of God shall have destroyed this world of sin, you will still be standing erect on the ruins of the universe, to open the fountains of mercy to the last sinner and to bear this last conquest in triumph to the home of happiness and glory.

DEIPARÆ IMMACULATÆ.

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ORATIO AD JESUM GLORIFICATOREM.

O Jesu, pars hæreditatis meæ et portio mea in terra viventium! hæreditatem meam restitue mihi. Ps. xv. 5.

O Jesu, merces mea magna nimis! Admitte me in bona Domini, quæ præparasti diligentibus te. I. Cor. ii. 9.

O Jesu, vita, salus et resurrectio mea! cupio dissolvi et esse tecum: mihi enim adhærere tibi bonum est. Ps. lxxii. 28.

ORATIO AD JESUM, UT QUOD IN NOBIS IPSE CŒPIT IN TERRA, IN CŒLO PERFICIAT.

O bone Jesu! O piissime Jesu! O dulcissime Jesu! O Jesu fili Mariæ Virginis, plene misericordia et pietate! O dulcis Jesu, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam miserere mei. O clementissime Jesu, te deprecor per illum sanguinem pretiosum, quem pro peccatoribus effundere voluisti, ut abluas omnes iniquitates meas, et in me respicias miserum et indignum, humiliter veniam petentem, et hoc nomen sanctum Jesu invocantem. O nomen Jesu, nomen dulce, nomen delectabile, nomen confortans! Quid est enim Jesus nisi Salvator? Ergo, Jesu, propter nomen sanctum tuum, esto mihi Jesus et salva me; ne permittas me damnari, quem tu de nihilo

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creasti. O bone Jesu, ne perdat me iniquitas mea, quem fecit omnipotens bonitas tua. O dulcis Jesu, recognosce quod tuum est, et absterge quod alienum est. O benignissime Jesu, miserere mei, dum tempus est miserendi, ne damnes me in tempore judicandi. Quæ utilitas in sanguine tuo, dum descendero in æternam corruptionem? Non mortui laudabunt te, Domine Jesu, neque omnes qui descendunt in infernum. O amantissime Jesu! O mitissime Jesu! O Jesu admitte me intrare in numerum electorum tuorum! O Jesu, salus in te credentium! O Jesu, solatium ad te confugientium! O Jesu, dulcis remissio omnium peccatorum! O Jesu, fili Mariæ Virginis, infunde in me gratiam, sapientiam, charitatem, castitatem et humilitatem, ut possim te perfecte diligere, te laudare, te perfrui, tibi servire, in te gloriari cum omnibus qui invocant nomen tuum, quod est Jesus. Amen.

ORATIO AD EXPRIMENDUM DEI AMOREM ET CŒLESTIS GLORIÆ DESIDERIUM.

Si inveni gratiam in conspectu tuo, Domine, ostende mihi faciem tuam. Exod. xxxiii. 13.

Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitæ meæ: ut videam voluptatem Domini et visitem templum ejus. Ps. xxvi. 4.

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus. Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fortem, vivum; quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei. Ps. xli. 1, 2.

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Quis dabit mihi pennas, sicut columbæ et volabo, et requiescam. Ps. liv. 7.

Quid mihi est in cœlo, et a te quid volui super terram? Defecit caro mea et cor meum, Deus cordis mei, et pars mea, Deus in æternum. Ps. lxxii. 25.

Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo. Philip. i. 23.

Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Domine virtutum! Concupiscit et deficit anima mea in atria Domini. Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum. Ps. lxxxiii. 1. Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine. in sæcula sæculorum laudabunt te. Ibid. 5. Melior est dies una in atriis tuis super millia. Ibid. 11.

Si oblitus fuero tui, Jerusalem, oblivioni detur dextera mea; adhæreat lingua mea faucibus meis, si non meminero tui, si non proposuero Jerusalem in principio lætitiæ meæ. Ps. cxxxvi. 5.

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NOTES.

It is to be hoped that these Notes will not be hastily and carelessly passed over, since they constitute an important part of this work. Some of them are considerations which should have been inserted in the text, and would have been so inserted had we not feared that they would make the chapters too lengthy. They are for the most part quotations from the Fathers, intended to confirm the teaching in the body of the work.

Note 1, p. 86.

THE BREVIARY.

The Psalms make up the bulk of the Breviary. Who under the influence of the Holy Ghost, wrote these magnificent prayers? This is a question to which a priest cannot be indifferent. Are all the Psalms of which the Psalter is composed the productions of holy King David?

1. Reasons for the Negative.

Writers of note have associated with David, as authors of the Psalms, Moses, Solomon, Asaph, Ethan and others, whose names are given by Sixtus of Siena in his *Bibliotheca Sancta* (Lib. I). This opinion is not new. St. Denis the Areopagite, St. Athanasius, St. Jerome, St. Hilary, and St. Isidore all held that David was not the sole author of the Psalms. Their reasons were the following:

1. The title of the Psalter is, *The Book of Psalms*, without the addition of the words, *of David*, which is a deviation from the rule followed in the case of the other Sacred Books, having only one author, as, for instance, *The Proverbs of Solomon; The Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.*

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2. At the end of the Seventy-first Psalm we read these words: *The praises of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.* Hence the conclusion that only the first seventy-one Psalms are David's.

3. In the Second Book of *Paralipomenon*, chapter 29, v. 30, we read: *And Ezechias and the Princes commanded the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David and Asaph, the Seer.* And as a matter of fact some Psalms following the Seventy-first bear the title of *Asaph*, from which it would seem that it is intended to designate him as their author.

2. Reasons for the Affirmative.

The common opinion, however, is that David is the author of all the Psalms, and this opinion would seem to be the true one. It was held by Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. John Chrysostom, by Cassiodorus and Theophylact and by many of the more modern writers.

The Council of Trent in the Fourth Session calls the Book of Psalms the *Psalter of David.* Our Lord, too, seems to ascribe the entire Book to the Holy King when He says: *David said in the Book of Psalms* (Luke xx). And when disputing with the Pharisees He cites a passage from the One Hundred and Ninth Psalm, as follows: *How doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying: The Lord said to my Lord.* St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews quotes from the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm and many others. This Epistle and that to the Romans abound with quotations from the Psalms, and the name of the author, when it is mentioned, is invariably that of David.

At any rate it is certain that some of the Psalms following the Seventy-first were composed by David, for our Lord ascribes to him the One Hundred and Ninth.

How, then, are the words: "*The praises of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,*" to be understood? The meaning is that Psalm Seventy-one is indeed the last which David composed; that the Psalms are not arranged in the order in which they were written; and that the one that should have been placed last is placed as the Seventy-first. And that they are not arranged in their chronological order is clear from the fact that the One Hundred and Forty-third Psalm bears the title: *A*

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Psalm of David against Goliath, while Psalm Third bears this title: *The Psalm of David when he fled from the face of his son Absalom.*

The passage from *Paralipomenon*, given above, admits of easy explanation. Asaph had charge of the music or orchestra, employed by David in singing these sacred Canticles. David wrote the words, Asaph set them to music; and hence it was quite proper to say that the Levites *Praised the Lord with the words of David and Asaph, the Seer.*

The word Seer, like the word Prophet, is often applied in Holy Writ to those charged with the office of singing the praises of God: *Prophetare*, idest, *psallere.*

Note 2, p. 136.

ECCLESIASTICAL CELIBACY.

1. Virginity and Continency. The Idea Entertained of them in Every Age.

The life of the Angels is the pattern of virginity. It is a flower of heaven planted upon the earth to remind wayfarers in this land of exile that one day they are to be of the company of the Angels. Some writers, with the laudable purpose of emphasizing the excellence of the New Law, have taught that the Immaculate Mother of our Saviour was the first to lift on high the standard of virginity; that before her this virtue was unknown to the world; and that the people of God were ignorant of it. The zeal of these writers is not according to knowledge. Their assertions are wholly disproved by history and opposed to the legitimate inductions of sound theology. History tells us that virgins were held in honor by all peoples of antiquity; and theology teaches us that the glory of the Gospel shone with a reflected light by anticipation in men among God's chosen people and in the institutions of the Old Law. The religion of the Word Incarnate did not begin with the birth in Bethlehem; it was the hope of man even from the Fall. From that moment Divine Wisdom designed the marvels of redemption; His institutions were figures of its mysteries, and His graces blossomed and matured into fruit; so that there is not a virtue or an excellence in Christianity of

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which the type is not given in shadowy outlines in some of the Saints of the Old Law. (*Man risen from his Fall*, by the Abbé Gritton, Vol. I., p. 20.)

This author names many instances among the Jews of those who practised virginity. There were many, especially among the Rechabites and Essenes, who lived a life in common and were bound by the vow of celibacy. Philo and Josephus have left us interesting accounts of their manner of life. They were even the admiration of the Pagans. The following splendid testimony is borne to them by Pliny: "A unique tribe, distinguished among all the tribes of the world; without women, removed from all pleasures of sense, strangers to money and finding their sole delight among their palms. Day by day their community is new-born, being continuously augmented by men who, weary of life and tossed about by the waves of fortune, come from every side to take up this manner of life. In this way, a thing that seems incredible, this family has lived for centuries without begetting, the conversion of others being the source of their fecundity." (Pliny, *Hist. Natural.*, Lib. V. Cap. XVII.)

2. The Church Obliges her Priests to Continency under the Severest Penalties.

By what right? If it may not be said that priestly continence is literally and rigorously of divine right, there is no question that it is, as Bellarmine says, in imitation of a divine pattern, that it was taught by the Apostles and is imposed by Ecclesiastical Law.

Could the Church require less of priests, who morning by morning immolate the Lamb without spot, than did the Law of Moses from the priests of Aaron, or the Pagans from the priests who offered sacrifices to false gods? The priests of the Temple of Jerusalem were obliged to continence for the entire year during which their term of office lasted, and the Greeks and Romans laid a similar obligation upon the priests who served their idols.

When there was question of the worship of their deities the Pagans recognized only one virtue and one vice: *Casta placent Superis*, says Catullus; and Plutarch said: *Diis omnia munda*,

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and in consequence the impure were thrust from their altars. Jews and Persians, Indians and Greeks, Romans and Gauls, all peoples, recognized something divine in celibacy. The same idea was found existing in the New World among the Mexicans and Peruvians, and even among the Hurons and the Iroquois. Among all peoples and in all ages there has been a persuasion that purity of body, that chastity, is an indispensable preparation for the exercise of sacred functions.

I quite agree, however, that Paganism was nothing more than a mass of rottenness, and that the Vestal Virgins bore the same resemblance to Christian Virgins that a hypocrite bears to a Saint. Paganism, while parading its chastity, everywhere set up altars to lust. Chastity is indigenous to heaven and, when transplanted to earth, it is with difficulty that it takes root in our corrupt soil. Jesus Christ came to teach us by precept, and still more by example, how it is to be cultivated, how it is to be made to exhale and diffuse its sweetness and its fragrance and to bear incomparable fruit. How tender a love did the Man-God, Himself a Virgin from all eternity and born of a Virgin Father among the splendors of the Saints, bear to this angelic virtue throughout the whole course of His life! He chose a Mother; she was a virgin and will be so for all the eternities, and this will ever be one of her sweetest and most glorious titles.

That a God on becoming man should be born of a Virgin goes without saying, but this was not enough: He wished that everybody about Him, every one nearest Him, should breathe forth only purity and innocence.

Mary was given one to aid her in watching over the infancy of Jesus; he was a virgin. Another was sent before the face of Jesus to prepare the way for Him; he was a virgin. Jesus gathered together disciples and made them sharers in His divine mission; they were virgins, says St. Jerome, or made the vow of chastity after they had been called: *Apostoli aut virgines, aut post nuptias continentes.* He permitted His enemies to impute to Him all sorts of crime, but there was one He would not suffer them to name. Dying on the Cross He committed to a Virgin disciple His Virgin Mother. Now triumphant in heaven and seated at the right hand of His Father, His throne is encompassed by Virgins, who form His guard

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of honor, who accompany Him wherever He goes, and who sing in His praise that mysterious Canticle which only virgins can sing.

Jesus Christ having so dignified chastity in His own person left it to His priests as the most beautiful adornment of their priesthood and the greatest glory of their ministry. A priest whose reputation is clean and whose morals are pure is dear to the heart of God and useful to His Church; whereas, on the contrary, a priest whose morals are not beyond reproach, a pastor who is not chaste, what sort of a priest, what sort of a pastor is he?

For us, therefore, chastity is a treasure of infinite price, but we bear it about in frail vessels, and how shall we protect it against so many enemies ever on the alert to rob us of it?

3. The Means of Preserving Chastity and of Defending It against the Attacks of Our Enemies.

1. Humility.—*Omnis fortitudo in humilitate, quia fragilis est omnis superbia* (Aug. Enarr. in Ps. CXII.). *Habemus thesaurum in vasis fictilibus* (II. Corinth. iv. 7). *Audeo dicere, superbis continentibus expedit cadere, ut in eo ipso in quo se extollant, humilientur; quid autem prodest cui est continentia, si dominetur superbia?* (Aug. serm. 354 ad Nor.) *Pergite viam sublimitatis pede humilitatis* (Id. de sancta Virg. III. 53).

2. Mortification.—*Castigo corpus meum . . . quod proprie ad continentiæ labores et corporale jejunium atque afflitionem carnis pertinet; per hanc se pugilem quemdam strenuum suæ carnis esse describens, nec in vacuum adversus eam ictus continentiæ exercuisse designans; sed triumphum pugnæ, mortificatione sui corporis acquisisse; quo verberibus continentiæ castigato et jejuniorum cæstibus eliso, victori spiritui immortalitatis coronam et incorruptionis contulit palmam. Vides legitimum colluctationis ordinem et spiritualium certaminum contemplaris eventum. Quemadmodum athleta Christi adeptus de rebellatrice carne victoriam, subiecta illa quodammodo pedibus suis, ut sublimis triumphator invehitur* (Cass. Inst. lib. V. c. 18).—*Cum infirmor, tunc potens sum* (II. Cor. xii. 10).—*Multo melius est stomachum dolere quam mentem; imperare corpori quam servire; gressu vacillare quam pudicitia.* (S. Hier. Ep. ad Salvin.)

3. Avoiding the occasion.—*Fugite si non vultis perire* (Aug.

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in Ps. LVII.).—*Virgo es, quid te mulieris delectat societas? Quid fragilem et futilem ratem magnis committis fluctibus, et grande periculum navigationis incertæ securus ascendis?* (S. Hier. Ep. ad Gaud.).—*Lucernæ flammam oleum nutrit, et libidinis ardorem consuetudo fœminarum* (S. Nilus, Oratio II de luxuria).—*O quoties ego ipse in eremo et in illa vasta solitudine quæ, exusta solis ardoribus, horridum monachis præstat habitaculum, putabam me romanis interesse deliciis! Sedebam solus, quia amaritudine repletus eram. Horrebant sacco membra deformia, et squalida cutis situm æthiopicæ carnis obduxerat. Quotidie lacrymæ, quotidie gemitus, et si quando repugnantem somnus imminens oppressisset, nuda humo ossa vix hærentia collidebam. De cibis vero et potu taceo, cum etiam languentes monachi aqua frigida utantur, et coctum aliquid accepisse luxuria sit. Ille igitur ego qui ob gehennæ metum, tali me carcere damnaveram, scorpionum tantum socius et ferarum, sæpe choreis interueram puellarum. Pallebant ora jejuniis et mens desideriis æstuabat in frigido corpore, et ante hominem sua jam carne præmortuum, sola libidinum incendia bulliebant. Itaque omni auxilio destitutus, ad Jesu jacebam pedes, rigabam lacrymis, crine tergebam, et repugnantem carnem hebdomadarum inedia subjugabam.* (S. Hier. Ep. ad Eust.)

4. Prayer.—*Ut scivi quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det—adii Dominum et deprecatus sum illum* (Sap. VIII. 21).—*Cum me pulsat aliqua turpis cogitatio, recurro ad vulnera Christi. Cum me premit caro mea, recordatione vulnerum Domini mei resurgo. Cum diabolus mihi parat insidias, fugio ad viscera misericordiæ Domini mei, et recedit a me.* (Inter opera S. August.)

Note 3, p. 145.

PRAYER.

A certain Bishop, in making the visitation of his diocese, called upon a poor woman far advanced in years who, he was told, was the edification of the whole village. Among other questions he asked her what book of piety she read oftenest. My Lord, she said, I cannot read.—But at least you frequently pray to God?—My Lord, I can only say my Rosary—the *Our*

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Father, the *Hail Mary* and the *Creed*, but it oftens happens that I do not finish it, though I begin it ten times during the course of the day.—Why so?—Well, you see when I commence to say the *Our Father*, I cannot understand how God can be so good as to wish a poor creature, such as I am, who do not even know my catechism, to call Him Father, and I confess that this thought often makes me burst into tears, and so you see I cannot finish my Rosary.

The Bishop, whose eyes were now suffused with tears, turning to those who accompanied him, said: Gentlemen, such prayer is worth more than all of ours. . . . Continue, my good woman, and pray always in this way.

This fact is related by La Harpe.

Note 4, p. 154.

THE STUDIES OF A PRIEST. THE DEPLORABLE RESULTS OF IGNORANCE IN A PRIEST.

The ignorance of priests and the disorders which follow upon it very largely account for the loss of faith and morals in a country. This the enemies of the Church know perfectly well. When at the outbreak of the French Revolution the clergy were called upon to take the oath to the Civil Constitution, Mirabeau said: Educated priests will refuse to take this oath, and once we have driven them out and brought the cloisters into disrepute, we can replace them with men destitute of faith and morals, who will do more to aid us in robbing France of her Catholicity than we can possibly do with all our decrees.

Note 5, p. 163.

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

The Bible should be constantly in the hands of a priest: *Quid est Scriptura Sacra*, asks St. Gregory, *nisi quædam epistolæ omnipotentis Dei ad creaturam suam?* And in another place he calls it: *Cor et anima Dei.*—And St. Augustine says of it: *Quoniam generatio labitur, generatio venit et celeri cursu currunt tempora; voluit Deus Scripturam sacram manere veluti tabulas*

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quasdam et quoddam Dei chirographum, quod omnes transeuntes legerent ut viam, qua ad Dei promissa venitur, tenerent.

Ubera Ecclesiæ duo Testamenta Scripturarum; hinc sugatur lac omnium sacramentorum (Id. in epist. Joan.).

Puteus Jacob, ex quo oriuntur aquæ, quæ in oratione funduntur (Inter opera S. Bern.).

Divinus sermo sacræ Scripturæ est fluvius plenus et altus, in quo et agnus ambulat et elephas natat (S. Gregor.).

Quid potest esse vita sine scientia Scripturarum per quam ipse Christus cognoscitur (Hieron. ad Paul.)?

Christus in Scriptura sacra. 1. *præfigurabatur in legalibus figuris.* . . . 2. *præmostrabatur in historiis.* . . . 3. *prædocebatur in moralibus.* . . . 4. *prophetabatur in prophetis* (S. Bonav. de Princ. S. S.).

Hoc dicat sacerdos, quod ex divina lectione didicerit, non quod præsumptione humani sensus invenerit (S. Prosper).

Stude igitur, o sacerdos, cui legis divinæ summa commissa est; stude non tam lectioni legis, quam operi legis, ut, spectantibus te populis, fias divinæ legis interpretatio simul et liber (S. Jo. Chrysost.).

THE INTERPRETERS OF SACRED SCRIPTURES.

The most complete and the most highly esteemed work on the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures is that of Cornelius à Lapide, a man eminently pious, possessed of vast erudition and a profound theologian. As to the particular parts of the Sacred Text which should be especially studied and meditated upon by a priest, he will find much to quicken his faith and stimulate his piety in Bellarmine and Berthier on the Psalms; in Pequigny on the Epistles of St. Paul (*Triplex Expositio*); and in the magnificent *Catena Aurea* of St. Thomas, where the Holy Doctor has brought together and woven into one marvellous text the most beautiful passages of the Fathers on the Gospels.

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Note 6, p. 164.

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF A PRIEST'S STUDIES.

1. Scholastic Theology.

Theology, or the science of Revelation, may be called the Philosophy of Faith, because Faith appeals to the intellect, according to the beautiful expression of St. Anselm: *Fides quærens intellectum.*

The third volume of the work entitled "*Studies in Theology, Philosophy and History,*" published by some of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, contains a valuable article on the advantages of Scholastic Theology. We will transcribe a few passages of it.

The doctrine of the Church is unchangeable in the sense that it cannot contradict itself; it is also unchangeable in the sense that nothing can be added to the deposit of revelation. But there is a sense in which the treasure of revealed doctrine is susceptible of development. If we cannot add to it, we can nevertheless gain a clearer and more certain knowledge of its contents. In this sense the Church, like every organized body and every living being, is subject to the conditions of growth and development.

Wonderful to say, God makes use of the same means to stimulate the growth and development of doctrine in His Church that the powers of hell make use of to corrupt it, namely, the assaults of unbelief and heresy. *There must be also heresies,* says St. Paul. These are the inevitable results of the free will of man and of the imperious tendency within him to rebel against the authority of God. But such waywardness and rebellion go only so far as God in His providence permits them to go; they manifest themselves at a time prefixed by Him, and their success is always in the order and measure best suited to the carrying out of His designs.

The author having shown how error proceeds—that it first attacks the unity of God, next the dogma of the Incarnation, next that of the Blessed Trinity, and lastly that of human free will and grace; how the Doctors of the Church by their learning and writings repelled these assaults, and how the Church brought the successive conflicts to a close as they arose by her infallible decisions, thus setting up one by one the

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columns which sustain the edifice of divine science, goes on to point out how St. Thomas brought together all these scattered materials, arranging and coordinating them in a magnificent synthesis, and presenting them in his *Summa* in a structure at once systematic and complete.

How happy an alliance, he goes on to say, between revealed truth and the fundamental laws of the human mind! How naturally the teachings of the Fathers fit into this plan, and with such method that one would say that it had all been thought out *a priori!* How intimate the connection of dogma with dogma! What wonderful analogies are presented at every step, in the consideration of which the mind is borne on to the origin of all things! Above all, what admirable unity! God is considered in His essence and His inner life; He is considered as He manifests Himself externally in the double creation of spirit and matter, and in the creation of man, the precious link which binds the two together; He is considered in His relation to creatures, as leading them back to Himself by the moral law and grace, by the Incarnation and the Sacraments, by rewarding the good and punishing the evil. Here is the whole of theology; here in a sense is the entire universe, with the motive of its being, its origin and its destiny. What book can be compared with a book like this, which sets forth these truths in a style so clear and so graceful, and as luminous as the azure sky? What science is comparable with this science?

Of all sciences, says Aristotle, speaking of philosophy, there is none that surpasses this in dignity, because there is none more divine. Now, a science can be divine in two senses, either because it appertains to God or because it treats of the things of God. The science in question claims this double prerogative, first because God is its object, inasmuch as He is the Principle and Cause of everything that exists; and next because He is its subject, it being wholly occupied with Him. (Metaph. Lib. 1.) Who does not see that this eulogy of philosophy properly applies only to theology?

The Advantages which Priests Gain from the Study of Scholastic Theology.

Priests trained in the Scholastic System will get into the way of not laying aside a question until they have examined

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it from every point of view, analyzed all its constituent elements and seen it in all its bearings; in a word, until they have mastered the whole subject. In this way they will be guarded against error in as far as a created intelligence can be, because error arises precisely from an incomplete knowledge of a subject, and from affirming absolutely, by reason of the analysis being incomplete, what is only partially true. Those whose minds have been trained in the Scholastic System will be constantly on their guard against this danger. The habit of analysis, which will be formed in them, will enable them to detect errors which, like counterfeit money, pass current in society, and to extract the pure gold of truth from the alloy in which it is frequently found in combination.

Scholastic Theology in its teaching is reliable, luminous and complete. It gives a résumé of Holy Scripture and the Fathers; and it therefore supplies for present exigencies the knowledge which the young levite has not yet had time to get at first hand, thus admirably preparing him to take up later on those grand studies to which he should devote all the time he can spare from his ministerial work. Thus prepared by a teaching so methodical and complete, possessed of truth in its most precise form, and warned against all sorts of danger, the priest can go forward fearlessly and launch out upon this vast sea without apprehension of shipwreck.

The author of the dissertation from which the above extracts are taken is showing the advantages of the scholastic method considered in itself, but what he says may be equally applied to those works of genius which the great theologians have left us. The meagre compendiums in which the divine science is given us in shadowy and fragmentary outline and without definite scope cannot be of any real help in broadening the mind and making real theologians.

2. Other Subjects of Study for the Priest.

Should the priest limit himself exclusively to ecclesiastical studies? Is he forbidden to enter upon the study of purely human sciences?

The answer is ready at hand. God is the Author of the world of nature as well as of the world of grace. The philos-

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opher contemplates God by the natural light of reason in the marvels of creation; the theologian contemplates Him by the light of faith, principally in the marvels of redemption. This latter point of view, while more elevated, does not exclude the former. The priest will always be able to so use the natural sciences as to make them tributary to theology and its handmaids, for theology is the Queen of Sciences.

And would you allow the priest to read profane authors and Pagan poets? Why not, that is, provided he does so wisely and with moderation, and his intention is pure and honest? All the great Doctors of the Church, beginning with St. Paul, have read them, and have, when occasion required, drawn from this arsenal powerful weapons for the defence and triumph of the truth.

But St. Jerome is against you. Read his letter to Eustochium, *De custodia Virginitatis*. The Saint, with a view of persuading his spiritual daughter not to read the Pagan authors, says to her: *Quæ communicatio luci ad tenebras? Qui consensus Christi cum Belial? Quid facit cum Psalterio Horatius? Cum Evangelio Maro?—Simul bibere non debemus calicem Christi et calicem dæmoniorum.*

What you say is very true. As a matter of fact he did say this in addressing a Christian virgin, and we would say precisely the same thing to a nun living in a cloister; but let us go on and examine the rest of this letter, and we shall see what St. Jerome wrote of himself. Being very sick, he says, I had a vision. I was caught up in spirit and taken before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, who asked who I was. I answered, I am a Christian. Thou liest, said the Judge, thou art a Ciceronian and not a Christian, for where thy treasure is there is thy heart also. I remained silent and abashed. It was decided that I should be beaten with rods, and I cried out with all my might: *Misere mei, Domine, misere mei.* Finally those who stood by interceded for me with the Judge and besought him to pardon me the thoughtlessness and caprice of my youth, and I promised nevermore to read profane authors. *Domine*, I said, *numquam habuero codices sæculares, si legero, te negavi.* The Saint adds: *Nec vero sopor ille fuerat, aut vana somnia, quibus sæpe deludimur. Liventes, fateor, habuisse me scapulas, plagas sensisse post somnum et tanto dehinc studio*

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divina legisse quanto non antea mortalia legeram. Then deploring his past blindness he said: *Miser ego, lecturus Tullium jejunabam, et si quando in memet reversus Prophetam legere cœpissem, sermo horrebat incultus. Et quia lumen cœcis oculis non videbam, non oculorum putabam culpam esse, sed solis.*

Does this fact in the life of St. Jerome prove that a priest should deny himself the study of profane authors?

No, such a conclusion would be too broad. The conduct of St. Jerome was indeed reprehensible. God wished him to be the interpreter of the Divine Oracles, and he, instead of applying himself to a severe study of the Sacred Scriptures, spent his time in reading profane authors of whom he had become enamoured in his youth. Of these he had a perfect knowledge, as may be seen from the frequency with which he quotes them in his writings, although after the vision narrated above he never again opened a profane author, as he himself affirms in his Apology in answer to Rufinus.[1] St. Jerome did not read Pagan authors for the sake of the doctrine they contained, but rather because he was carried away by the charm of their style and the fascination of their eloquence. First, then, he was guilty of vanity, and next he was in error, because he put pleasure before duty.

But to read the ancient authors as did Clement of Alexandria when he was writing his *Stromati*, or Eusebius his *History*, or Lactantius his *Institutes*, or Augustine his *City of God*, is a study at once meritorious for the priest and advantageous to the cause of faith. So thought St. Basil when he dictated his letter *Ad Adolescentes* on the way Christians should read Pagan authors. The learned Thomassin has written a large work on the subject.

Therefore to read over the ancient authors from time to time is praiseworthy. Of course it would be wrong to give oneself exclusively to such reading, or to allow it to become a passion. *Thou hast found honey*, said the Wise Man; *eat what is sufficient for thee lest, being glutted therewith, thou vomit it up;* and the Greek poet says: *Ipsius enim mellis nimietas est bilis.*

But a priest should absolutely refuse to read authors who do

[1] This point seems by no means settled, and many critics hold a contrary opinion.—TR.

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not respect the virtue of chastity; first, because such reading is a lamentable loss of time, and, next, because it stains the imagination and fills the mind with indecent pictures. Then, again, such reading kindles a violent conflict between those earthy and lustful thoughts and the pure and holy ones which should ever fill the mind of a man of God, a conflict like to that of Jacob and Esau who struggled in their mother's womb. Still Jacob and Esau were brothers, but the doctrine of lust and the doctrine of the Gospel are not sisters: they are both enemies each opposed to the other, the one dragging us down to earth, the other lifting us up to heaven. What a torment he is preparing for himself who breathes the foul air of licentiousness and, without any call to do so, stirs up such pestilential filth!

Listen to the words of one who was no preacher of chastity:

> "Eloquar invitus, teneros ne tange poetas
> Submoveo dotes impius ipse meos."

The same author adds:

> "Carmina quis potuit tuto legisse Tibulli,
> Vel tua, cujus opus Cinthia sola fuit?
> Quis poterit lecto durus discedere Gallo?
> Et mea nescio quid carmina tale sonat."
> (Ovid., *De Remedio Amoris*, II.)

Again he says in another place:

> "Crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro;
> Vita verecunda est, musa jocosa mihi."
> (*Trist.*, II.)

The words of St. Gregory Nazianzen are very apposite: *Dicere, audire et facere, brevi distant intervallo.*

And now let us make an end of this note already too long. The Word-made-Flesh is the light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world. Whatever Christian or Pagan has written that is true or good or useful is a ray of that divine light which illuminates all intelligences. Hence the Church has a right to claim all this as her own, since it is part of the deposit of truth which it is her mission to preserve and hand on to future ages. And indeed this she has always done. Her doctors read all books and discussed all doctrines:

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Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Faith was the rule by which they distinguished the true from the false, the precious from the vile, according to the Scripture admonition.

Note 7, p. 233.

AN INSTANCE OF ZEAL.

Father Brydaine went to Aigues-Mortes to begin a mission; he found the church empty. Fired with generous zeal, he put on his surplice and, bell in hand, went up and down the street, stopping those whom he met, pressing and urging them to come and hear the word of God. He went back to the church followed by an immense crowd, sceptical and scoffing, and much amused by this novel spectacle. The missionary got up into the pulpit and portrayed death in language so terrible that the smile of scorn faded from the lips of his listeners; their frowardness was abashed by his words of holy indignation, and, weeping and sobbing, these new Ninivites came penitent to the sacred tribunal, which, as Bossuet says, justifies those who are their own accusers. Such is zeal.

Note 7, part 2, p. 233.

ZEAL.

Father Valuy of the Company of Jesus recently wrote a small work with a view of commending to all priests zeal for the salvation of souls. The following is an outline of the arguments presented to his readers:

1. Man is the head of the family, the ruler of society, the king of creation. In the domain of politics he can keep peace or evoke a tempest, preserve or disturb the equilibrium of the world. Woman is only his helpmate and is inferior to him in the natural and social order. Hence we must turn our attention directly to the men. Whoso does not study and know men will be ignorant of the most elementary notions of zeal.

2. To labor zealously and untiringly for the salvation of men is the most constraining duty of our time. The pride of reason has been substituted for the humility of faith, and

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license and corruption have usurped the sublime morality of the Gospel. Now, who does not know that this decadence of faith, this degradation of morals, which from France has spread over all Europe, is to be ascribed not to the women but to the men?

3. In the measure in which we fail to make the spiritual needs of men our work, in the same measure will they get into the way of caring for neither priest nor religion. What sort of being will man grow to be if we occupy ourselves solely with the saving of women? A being the like of whom has never been seen in this or any age or country, without God and without a thought of a future life, whose only habits will be those of violence and whose only desire that of creating disorder. Society in turn will speedily become a repulsive aggregation of covetous and jealous mortals, with only one purpose in life, that of accumulating wealth as a means to gratify the baser passions. To what, then, will our ministry be reduced in a multitude so degraded? Simply to the routine of baptizing and marrying and burying, and possibly we may not always have even this to do. But is this the ministry of building up established by God to generate Jesus Christ in souls, to nourish and strengthen His life in them?

4. If you do not set to work upon men, you are building upon a foundation of sand. You may devote your energies to the children, but will they follow a different mode of life from that taught them by the example of their fathers? You may beautify your churches and richly adorn them, but where will be the good of it? In a little while there will be no worshippers, none to listen to your preaching, no, not even penitents at your confessional or communicants at the Sacred Table.

5. Women naturally set their faces towards heaven, and men are just as naturally borne onward to the abyss below; and can you, a priest of God, contemplate such a spectacle in cold blood? If you do not put forth your best energies to save the nobler part of your flock, can you regard yourself as a faithful shepherd, or have you within you a father's heart?

6. The activity of these latter times is marvellous. Men annihilate space, multiply machinery for prodigiously increasing all sorts of products, and penetrate and search the earth

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in quest of gold and precious gems. And in the midst of this restless, tireless activity is the priest alone to remain idle, listless, impassible and a stranger to the bustle and progress of the age?

Whoever the priest is who does not strive to do something more than his predecessors have done, who does not seek out new means by which to draw men from the torrent of iniquity in which they are being lost, is a priest who suffers himself to be beaten by the wicked, and a pastor who sleeps while the wolves are devastating his fold.

Be up and doing, then, ye priests and pastors of souls; set to work promptly with all earnestness and zeal to do something for these men.

But what is to be done? Ask God in prayer and He will tell you. The little work of Father Valuy, which is recommended to you, will give you some hints on this point. One thing will succeed in one parish, while in another something else will be more efficacious. You must take counsel of the times, of the conditions and the dispositions of your people. But, in any event, do something.

Note 8, p. 242.

CATECHISM.

An Italian theologian at the end of the eighteenth century examined and passed judgment upon the catechisms which were in use throughout the Christian world in his day. His work, which is curious and interesting, was published under this title: *On Modern Catechisms, a Critical and Theological Essay, by Francis Gusta, Abbot; Ferrara, 1748.* This little work in octavo was an authority in Rome, but it is very rare, and it is difficult to find a copy of it even in Italy.

The following are in substance his opinions on French catechisms:

1. The catechism of Avignon, published by order of the Provincial Council, is approved without restriction, and highly praised.

2. The author expresses about the same opinion of the catechism then in use in Marseilles.

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3. Alby's catechism is excellent and was translated into Italian.

4. Fleury's catechism was put on the index, *donec corrigatur*.

5. Bossuet's catechism is highly praised, but with some restrictions. Thus under the second commandment it is said that one must go to confession to his own pastor, or to one designated by him. This is contrary to the universal practice.

As to contrition, he is inclined to regard as doubtful the opinion which holds as sufficient contrition based upon the fear of the pains of hell. The author makes this reflection: It is one thing to say that the love of God is the most perfect means to insure one's salvation; and another to designate as doubtful an opinion which so many theologians hold to be perfectly safe, and which is mostly followed in practice.

6. The catechism of Collot, a doctor of the Sorbonne, is praised as replete with wisdom and containing only pure and unexceptionable doctrine. The only thing to which exception is taken is the failure of Collot to distinguish between feasts which are of rigorous precept, and those which are only of counsel or binding on certain persons.

7. But when the Abbot Gusta comes to speak of the catechism of Father Bougeant, he seems to want for words to express his praise and admiration. He calls the work of this learned Jesuit a *Golden Book*. Learning, precision, clearness pervade it throughout. He recommends it to every one, especially to ecclesiastics.

Note 9, p. 250.

IDEA OF CHRISTIAN ELOQUENCE.—ELOQUENCE OF ST. PAUL.

1. Defects in His Speech and Writings from a Human Point of View.

1. He often violates the rules of grammar, as when, writing to the Ephesians, he says: *I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.*

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. . . *The mystery has been made known to me.* St. Jerome's remarks are here to the point: *Nos quotiescumque solœcismos, aut tale quid annotamus, non Apostolum pulsamus, ut malevoli criminantur, sed magis Apostoli assertores sumus, qui absque rhetorico nitore sermonis, et verborum compositione, et eloquii venustate, ad fidem Christi mundum traduxit.* (In Ep. ad Eph.)

2. He is frequently obscure, and even St. Peter says of his Epistles: *In which are certain things hard to be understood.*[1] And Origen says: *Paulus elocutionibus interdum confusis et nimis implicatis utitur.* And St. Epiphanius: *Apostolus, distortis verbis in medium conjectis obscuram quidem et occultam facit lectionum elaborationem.*

This obscurity arose in a great measure, as St. Jerome says, from the difficulty which he, who had been caught up to the third Heaven, found in expressing in human speech the things that he had seen and heard: *Profundos et reconditos sensus lingua non explicat, et cum sæpe sentiat quid loquatur, id tamen in alienas aures puro non potest transferre sermone: quippe seipsum interpretari cupiens involvitur.* St. Paul says of himself that he is *rude in speech*, and he adds: *Christ sent me to preach not in the wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void;* and again in the next chapter: *My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and power, that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.* And still this man, so rude of speech and so little skilled in the art of expression, was most learned and gifted with marvellous eloquence.

2. Knowledge and Eloquence are Conspicuous in the Discourses and Epistles of St. Paul.

St. Paul knew Greek, which was the language of his native country, and he spoke it at Tarsus, Corinth and Athens, as Strabo relates. He also knew Hebrew, which he had learned at the school of Gamaliel, the most famous master of his day. He was familiar with the Pagan authors, and quotes them when occasion requires. In the first chapter of his Epistle

[1] II. Peter iii. 16.

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to Titus he quotes from Epimenides; in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians he quotes from Menander; and in his famous discourse at the Areopagus he introduces very appositely the beautiful words of the poet Aratus: *Ipsius enim et genus summus?* *Didicerat enim*, says St. Jerome, *a vero David extorquere de manibus hostium gladium, et Goliæ superbissimi caput proprio mucrone truncare.*

2. The discourses of St. Paul were not polished and elegant; all this he despised; but they had the nervousness and strength of true eloquence. In a single discourse he made Denis, a learned man of the Areopagus, a follower of Christ. He spoke before Felix of justice and chastity, and Felix was terrified. He spoke before King Agrippa, and the king said: *In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian.* He spoke before Festus, who, surprised at his learning and incapable of understanding his sublime doctrine, cried out: *Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.* He spoke before the inhabitants of Lystra, and they called him Mercury, *because he was chief speaker.*

3. St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome speak in the highest praise of the eloquence of the great Apostle. The latter writes in the following terms of him in a letter to Pammachius: *Paulum quotiescumque lego videor mihi non verba audire, sed tonitrua.* And in another letter to the same: *Paulus vas electionis, tuba Evangelii, rugitus leonis nostri, tonitrum gentium, flumen eloquentiæ Christianæ.*

Here is a splendid passage from Bossuet's panegyric on St. Paul.

At the close of the last century our fathers listened to a preacher who had somewhat of the rugged vehemence and the energetic simplicity of St. Paul. This was Father Beauregard. The following is a picture of him left us by one of his contemporaries:

With him the Gospel took the place of all other literature; the simplicity of his style was illuminated by flashes of genius, of which he was himself likely unconscious, because they were the result, not so much of a vivid imagination, as of a natural elevation of soul and a profound meditation of his subject. Even his most sublime passages were not beyond the comprehension of the common people. He was many-

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sided, and yet perfectly natural; he exhorted as a father, persuaded as a friend, threatened as a prophet. His words were not as flashes that bewilder and dazzle, but as thunders that prostrate and subdue. Some worthless writers, who knew little of their religion, called him an enthusiast; and so he was, but only in the sense in which Isaias, St. Paul and the most eloquent fathers of the Church were enthusiasts. When listening to his finest passages I was intent more on myself than on him; I thought less of admiring him than of improving myself, and this because he felt what he said, and I was overcome by his reasoning. If he inveighed against places of amusement, they were abandoned; if against bad books, they were burned; if on the duty of justice, restitution was made.

Our preachers have need of such a model to show that the good effects produced by a minister are due to his zeal and virtue.

Note 10, p. 283.

CARE OF SOULS.

The following are some rules which a pastor should adopt for his guidance in order to humbly and holily exercise his ministry:

1. First give example to others, and do more yourself than you exact of them.

2. When you are excited, taken by surprise or disturbed, refrain from speaking or acting or giving a command, lest you might be thought to act under the influence of passion.

3. Never try to force a man who is angry or carried away by passion; give him time to come to himself, that he may be in a condition to speak calmly and frankly.

4. Do not wrangle and contend with your inferiors, thereby running the risk of compromising your authority. You are not sent to dispute but to govern.

5. If you must refuse a request, do so in such a way as to make it clear that duty and necessity compel you. If you grant a request, do so with good grace and not reluctantly and churlishly, thus robbing the favor of its value, and making the granting of it less acceptable than a refusal.

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6. When you are forced to use rigor, let it be seen that you would much prefer, if it were possible, to discharge the penalty yourself than to impose it. Charity sweetens the bitterness of the remedy by preventing discouragement and desperation. If a lamb breaks a leg, the shepherd does not break the other also, or angrily beat it; he kindly lifts it up, carefully dresses the wounded member, takes it in his arms and tenderly carries it, now that it is no longer able to walk.

7. If one has offended you and frankly avows his fault, be on your guard against rebuking him for his past failings and his ingratitude to you; do not do as the serpent, which erases with its tail the traces made with its head. Rather let the dove be your pattern, which caresses the hand that strikes, and, after receiving a grain of salt or some millet, is reconciled and peace is made. When an inferior avows his fault, hold out your arms and take him to your heart.

8. Be not solicitous to justify yourself, or obstinate in maintaining your innocence. Say with David and St. Bernard: *Let the meek hear and rejoice;* say: I shall await the judgment of reasonable and fair men; or, rather, I shall await God's judgment. If He condemns me, then I shall also condemn myself and candidly avow my fault.

St. Francis de Sales carried out all these rules in practice, particularly the last two. When under an atrocious calumny, he was urged to justify himself. God knows, he said, how much my good name is necessary for His glory; I do not ask more than this. He was at peace, and it was not long until God clearly established his innocence.

Nothing can withstand rightful authority when firmness is concealed under kind words and gentle methods. But this is a science that is learned only in the school of the Holy Ghost: *His unction will teach you.* The unction of the Holy Ghost is the only master in the art of governing souls. O God, teach us to govern and to lead our brethren in all kindness and humility of heart. If we accomplish any good, let all know that it is Thine, while the evil that mingles with and corrupts the good is ours, because we are hard and exacting and rigorous.

I will add to this *Note* a few words on kindness.

To govern kindly requires more virtue and firmness than

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to govern with severity. Harshness of character, or secret pride or natural weakness makes a man imperious. He can endure nothing and, under pretext of zeal, he gives way to anger. Aristotle says that weak men are ordinarily more imperious and haughty in the exercise of authority than others, for the reason that they are conscious of their weakness, and have a dread of being despised.

Plutarch relates that one day the Sun and Boreas fell to disputing as to which had the greater power to attract men and gain their hearts. Boreas forthwith began to blow furiously, setting the air in violent motion and overturning everything in his path. Men wrapped their cloaks about them, hastened away to get under cover, closed doors and windows and, hidden in a corner, cursed Boreas and his blasts. The Sun in his turn appeared, flooded men with his beneficent rays, filling their whole being with a soothing warmth. They forthwith threw open their cloaks, and, smiling gladly, welcomed the Sun to their hearts, and blessed it as a living image of the Divinity.

Rigor is a cold wind that freezes hearts and robs them of all power of action. Kindness is a beneficent breeze that warms and dilates them and communicates to them movement and life.

There are some who cannot correct a small fault without committing a greater. They are like unskilled slaters working upon the roofs of our houses, who break more slate than they put on.

I will give here a reflection of Plato's on kindness. He says that when the goddess Love departed from heaven and Jupiter ruled alone, he filled the place with peals of thunder and terrifying flashes of lightning. There was in consequence a revolt among the dwellers of Olympus, everything was consumed by fire and a paradise was changed into a hell, whereas while gentle Love governed all the gods were at peace.

Note 11, p. 342.

We will not speak here of the necessity of suffering as common to both priest and layman. Both must do penance because both are sinners. Both must endure sacrifice because the passions cannot be subdued nor heaven gained except at

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the cost of bitter trials. But we will give two important examples to complete what has already been said on the subject.

The Struggles of a Carthusian Monk against Sleep and Sloth.

There lived a little while back at La Part-Dieu a Father who was strangely afflicted with an irresistible tendency to sleep. Though he had the best possible intention, he could not wake at eleven o'clock to go to sing Matins. While nature had made him sleepy, it had also made him a very expert mechanic. Without training and with no knowledge of mathematics, but solely by thought and labor, he constructed a perfect clock to which he attached a battery of loud-sounding bells to serve as an alarm. But this was not enough. He next connected the clock with a blackbird, a cock and a drum, which he had arranged about the room. At the appointed hour there was a terrible clatter. For some nights things went on famously, but after a time the blackbird whistled, and the cock crowed and the drum beat and . . . the Monk snored.

Another would have been discouraged, but he was a genius, and so in a little while he had contrived a serpent, which he placed under his head, and which at the appointed hour began hissing: *It is time, get up.* The serpent was more successful than the blackbird, the cock, the drum and the bells. Things went on admirably, and the good Monk never failed to wake. But, alas! at the height of his joy he made a humiliating discovery: he had thought himself only sleepy, but now he realized that he was also lazy; for when he woke he was reluctant to leave his hard bed. It was so sweet a luxury just to lie a little while longer with his eyes closed, in spite of the danger of again falling off asleep. But this cannot go on, he said; it must be corrected. The religious felt guilty and the mechanic humiliated. The devil could boast of having got the better of both whereas the cloister must be victorious.

So forthwith he hung a heavy table above his poor bed in such a way that as soon as the serpent had given his charitable admonition: *Get up,* it would drop suddenly upon his shins. More than once the hapless Father went into choir

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limping and bruised. But, alas! who would believe it? Whether it was that the serpent had lost his falsetto, or that as time went on the table fell more gently, or that the old man had grown more sleepy, or that his legs had become hardened, or that he took the precaution to get them out of the way in time to escape punishment, certain it is that he soon saw the necessity of some more satisfactory contrivance, and so every evening before lying down he tied a rope to his arm, which at the appointed hour was drawn taut, and without warning pulled him out of bed.

He was not disconcerted, and the Lord only knows what other novel projects he was turning over in his brain against sleepiness, when he suddenly became aware that he was about to sleep on forever. To sleep? O no; this fervent Christian, in spite of his venial fault of laziness, and full of trust in Him who pardons, formed a different judgment. Ah, he cried out, dying: *At length I awake.* These were his last words.[1]

Victory over Self-love.

One day when Rubens was walking in the suburbs of Madrid he entered a convent of monks of austere life, and was surprised to see in the poor and humble choir a picture which gave evidence of much talent in the artist who had painted it. The picture represented the death of a monk. Rubens called the attention of his pupils to it and they all shared his admiration. And who can be the painter of this? asked Van Dyck, the favorite pupil of Rubens. There was a name written at the bottom of the picture, said Van Thulden, but it has been carefully erased. Rubens sent for the Prior, saying he wished to speak to him. The old Monk was asked by Rubens the name of the artist whose work had elicited his admiration. The painter is no longer of this world, said the Prior. What! dead! exclaimed Rubens, dead! and until now no one has heard of him; and his name, which should be immortal, is still unknown, a name which might possibly eclipse my own. And I, added the artist with proud dignity, I am Peter Paul Rubens.

At mention of the name the pale face of the Prior lighted

[1] L. Veuillot.

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up and a tinge of color suffused his features. His eyes gleamed as he fixed them on Rubens and expressed more than he cared to have known; but this agitation lasted only a moment. The Monk cast his eyes down and folded his arms, which in his sudden enthusiasm he had lifted up to heaven and repeated: The artist is no longer of this world. But, Father, tell me his name, that I may make it known to the world and give him the glory he deserves. And Rubens and his disciples Van Dyck, Van Thulden and James Jordaens crowded about the Prior and begged him to give them the name of the painter.

The Monk trembled, drops of cold sweat stood out upon his forehead, his emaciated cheek and thin lips moved convulsively as if about to reveal the mystery of which he possessed the secret. His name, his name? urged Rubens.

The Monk made a grave gesture. Listen, he said. You have not understood me. I said that the painter of this picture is no longer of this world, but I do not mean to say that he is dead. Oh, then he is living, he is living; tell us who he is, tell us who he is.

He has taken leave of the things of this world, replied the Prior, and is a monk in a convent. A monk? Father, a monk? Tell me in what convent, for he must come out. When God sets the seal of genius upon a man he should not bury himself in solitude. God has given him a sublime mission and he should fulfil it. Tell me the cloister where he is hidden, and I shall go and bring him out and show him the glory that awaits him. If he refuses, I shall have our Holy Father, the Pope, command him to go back into the world and again take up his brush. Father, added Rubens, the Pope loves me and will grant my request.

I will not give you his name, said the monk sternly, nor will I reveal the cloister where he has taken refuge.

The Pope will send you a command, replied Rubens, annoyed. Listen to me, said the Monk; listen to me, in heaven's name. Do you think that this man, before taking the resolution to quit the world and renounce name and fortune, had not to go through a terrible struggle? Do you think that he had not to endure bitter disappointments and cruel griefs before he finally learned, and here the monk

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struck his breast, that in this world all is vanity? Let him die in peace, then, in the asylum which he has sought as an escape from the world and its sorrows. Moreover, your efforts would be of no avail. This is a temptation, added the Monk, out of which he will come victorious by simply making the sign of the Cross; God will not withdraw His aid from him; the God who in His mercy graciously deigned to call him to Himself will never cast him out from His presence.

But, Father, persisted Rubens, he forfeits an immortal name. The immortality of this world, replied the Monk, is as nothing compared with the immortality of eternity. And the Monk threw back his cowl and changed the conversation with a view of preventing Rubens from pursuing the subject.

The celebrated artist left the convent accompanied by his brilliant cortège of pupils, and all returned to Madrid abstracted and silent.

The Prior went back to his little cell, knelt upon his mat of straw, which was also his bed, and uttered a fervent prayer to God; then gathering up his brushes, his colors and his easel, which he had kept in his cell, he pitched them into the river that flowed beneath his window. For a few moments he looked upon the waters that bore them away, and a momentary sadness came over him.

When they had passed out of sight he gave himself again to prayer before the Crucifix.

Note 12. p. 344.

(1) HOW JESUS CHRIST IS PRESENT IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

(2) HOW JESUS CHRIST WORKS IN THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIM.

1. The life of our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist is doubtless a hidden life. For this reason preachers nearly always represent Jesus Christ abiding in our Tabernacles as in a state of death and voluntary annihilation; not only as bound in the chains of His love, but as immersed in a sort of mystic sleep,

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which deprives Him of the use of His exterior senses. This is especially the language of ascetic writers, who appeal to this example to inculcate mortification of the senses and interior recollection.

Now by familiarizing the people with such ideas as these is there not a danger of weakening their respect and veneration for the August Sacrament of the Altar? Would a king stretched under a pavilion, closed in with curtains, invisible and asleep, so that he neither hears nor sees, make the same impression on those who might enter his apartments as he would if they saw him seated upon a throne wide awake, surrounded by his court and speaking and acting with sovereign authority?

It will be said that, though Jesus is in a state of mystic death, nevertheless He listens to us. Certainly He listens to us as God, and He would listen to us no matter in what part of the world we might be. But in instituting His Sacrament His purpose was to to make Himself present to us in a way accessible to our senses, and to communicate with us as He communicated with men during the course of His mortal life. Let us have no fear, then, of teaching the people that our Lord, in the Blessed Eucharist, has the actual use of His senses; that He sees us with the eyes of His body, and that He listens to us. It is true that, in order not to deprive us of the merit of faith, He very rarely exercises the functions of life visible to sense, such as speaking, walking and transporting Himself from place to place. But a simple material presence, as that of a man asleep, seems to me hardly conformable to the truth, hardly worthy the majesty of the glorified and triumphant Christ, and contrary to the end which He proposed to Himself in leaving us the Sacrament of His love.

I am well aware that the opinion here expressed by me is not that commonly held by theologians; but this same opinion was maintained in the eighteenth century by the great theologian, Cardinal Cienfuegos of the Company of Jesus, in a work printed in Rome in 1728, which was honored with the most splendid approbations and praised as a prodigy of science, erudition and piety.

We should be on our guard against novel opinions when these are a menace to piety. But if a new opinion is solidly

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founded on tradition, if it helps to give us a fuller knowledge of the inexhaustible wealth of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, if it gives greater intensity to our gratitude for His favors and blessings, then it has a claim upon our confidence. Now, this is true of the opinion I have set forth. We are wrong in fancying that we can know distinctly and explicitly everything that it is possible to know on the subject of religion. It is a mine which can never be worked out. The Blessed Eucharist particularly is an ocean of marvels, in which new riches are constantly being revealed to those who humbly and reverently penetrate and search its adorable depths. This is the explicit teaching of St. Thomas and Innocent III.

2. He who communicates in the state of grace receives, according to his more or less perfect dispositions, a greater or less abundance of spiritual gifts. The Flesh of the Saviour enters into our souls after the manner of material nourishment, which produces its effects by assimilation with the substance of him who partakes of it, with this difference, that in this case the nourishment, being nobler and more powerful than he who feeds upon it, has the virtue of transforming into itself him who receives it. In fine, there is a real union of the Body and Soul of the Saviour with him who communicates, as long as the Sacred Species are not consumed and destroyed. These points of doctrine are admitted by all Catholic theologians.

But after the Species have been consumed the union of the soul with Jesus Christ, resulting from Holy Communion, still subsists. And what sort of union is this? A moral union consisting of a conformity of wills, such as exists between two friends, or, if you will, between husband and wife separated by long distance. Such is the answer given by the bulk of modern theologians.

I readily accept this answer if there is question of Holy Communion made with ordinary dispositions. Jesus comes to the soul, sees nothing there that gives Him displeasure, gives it the kiss of peace, stays a few moments with it and then withdraws, leaving tokens more or less precious of His divine munificence. That this is what happens in the greater number of Holy Communions, I do not doubt.

But in the case of those great and generous souls, those fer-

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vent souls that bring to the Holy Table extraordinary dispositions of faith and love, to limit the effect of Holy Communion to this short visit, to a stay of at most a quarter of an hour, does not seem to me admissible.

1. The words of our Lord are too strong and energetic to be understood in any other sense except that of a permanent abidance.

2. It will be difficult to explain the language of tradition and the Fathers in any other sense. From a number of passages we select one from St. Cyril of Alexandria: *Unde considerandum est non habitudine, solum, quæ per charitatem intelligitur, Christum in nobis esse, verum etiam et per participationem naturalem; nam quemamodum si quis igne liquefactam ceram, aliæ ceræ similiter liquefactæ ita miscuerit, unum quid ex utrisque factum videatur; sic communicatione corporis et sanguinis Christi, ipse in nobis est, et nos in ipso.*[1]

3. How can the marvellous effects produced by Holy Communion in chosen souls and in the souls of Saints, whose lives are familiar to us, be explained on an hypothesis of a transitory presence of Jesus in them?

The explanation is, it will be said, that Holy Communion brought to those generous souls a great increase of grace. But, if this be so, what will be the particular effects of the Blessed Eucharist or the specific difference between that and the other Sacraments? Of Confirmation, for instance, which was instituted to increase sanctifying grace in us? No, on such an hypothesis I cannot realize the meaning of St. Paul's words: "*I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"

But you will say: Once the sacramental species are consumed, what will be the means of this union? The Flesh no longer exists. The bond of union will be the soul of Our Lord united with the Divinity. So thought the great Cardinal to whose work we have already referred. I am very much in favor of this opinion, because it seems admirably adapted to excite and stimulate our fervor, inasmuch as it shows us the enormous difference between the Holy Communion of one who is simply in the state of grace and one who has a seraphic love.

[1] In Joan. lib. X, cap. 41.

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Note 13, p. 375.

SOME USAGES WHICH THE CHURCH HAS SANCTIONED, AND SOME ABUSES WHICH SHE HAS CONDEMNED.

1. Usages which were at Certain Times Permitted.

I. In former times the Church permitted deacons, after the celebration of Mass, to bring Holy Communion to those who could not assist at the Sacred Mysteries in order that they might receive in their homes; she permitted Popes to send Holy Communion to bishops as a token of peace and union; she permitted solitaries to preserve the Sacred Species in their cells and to communicate themselves; she permitted the faithful in seasons of persecution to take the Blessed Sacrament to their homes, to carry it with them on their journeys by land and sea, and to nourish themselves with the Bread of the Strong in the hour of danger and when struggles were about to come upon them.

St. Thomas of Canterbury, when setting out to visit Henry II., of whose hostile disposition towards him he was well aware, carried the Blessed Eucharist concealed upon his breast, for the purpose of partaking of it in case he should find himself in danger of death. This fact is given in a life of him written in French.

The unfortunate Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, when shut up in prison by the bloody Elizabeth, asked in vain for the services of a Catholic priest. The Holy Pope, Saint Pius V., touched by her misfortune, allowed her to communicate herself, which she frequently did by means of capsules containing consecrated Hosts, which were secretly conveyed to her by her friends, as Father Coussin relates in his *Cour Sainte.*

II. The practice of giving Holy Communion under both species, as also that of giving it to children immediately after baptism, was long prevalent in the Church. Here is what the Council of Clermont, held under Urban II., in 1095, says: *Ne quis communicet de Altari, nisi corpus separatum et sanguinem similiter sumat, nisi per necessitatem aut cautelam.* These last words are explained by what Pope Pascal II. says: *Præter in parvulis aut omnino infirmis, qui panem absorbere non possunt.*

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Holy Communion under both species was explicitly forbidden to the laity by the Councils of Constance, Basle and Trent.

At the request of the Emperor Ferdinand, Pius IV. permitted some German bishops to give Holy Communion in both Species, hoping by this concession to win back those who had gone over to Protestantism. It was soon discovered that this was a mistake, and St. Pius V. withdrew the concession, and commanded under penalty of excommunication the Decree of Trent, as to Holy Communion in one Species, to be inviolably observed.

III. At the Papal Mass the deacon and the subdeacon partake of the same Host with the Pope: *Pontifex sumat unam partem Hostiæ et aliam in duas partes dividit pro communione diaconi et subdiaconi.*[1] Church history tells us that certain priests broke off pieces of the Sacred Host to give Holy Communion to laymen, and some theologians have thought that this might be done when there are no other hosts consecrated. This is a mistake, because the Rubric of the Missal says that this may be done only in a case of extreme necessity, namely, when Viaticum is to be brought to one who is dying.

IV. There was at one time a very prevalent practice of burying the Blessed Sacrament with the dead. We read in the life of St. Basil, Archbishop of Cæsarea, that, having celebrated the Sacred Mysteries for the first time, he divided the Sacred Host into three parts, one of which he preserved to be placed in the tomb with him after he was dead: *Dividens panem in tres portiones, unam quidem suscepit cum timore multo, aliam vero servavit ad consepeliendum sibi, tertiam autem super columbam argenteam suspendit super altare.* Pope St. Gregory relates in his Dialogues, Book II, Chapter 24th, that St. Benedict, having learned that the earth had twice given up the body of a young novice who had been buried, gave with his own hand the Blessed Eucharist to the relatives of the deceased with instructions to place it reverently upon the body and then to bury it. The instructions of the Saint were followed and the earth retained the body, and no longer, as had before happened, gave up the dead.

[1] Card. Bona, De Sacr. Liturgia, Cap. XVII. n. 8.

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2. Abuses Condemned by the Church.

I. The Greeks had a practice of consecrating on Holy Thursday a large number of hosts which were preserved during the entire year for the sick, and, in order to prevent corruption setting in, they employed certain preparations by no means becoming to the Body of our Lord. Pope Eugene IV. condemned this practice, and recommended the Greeks to renew the Sacred Species often during the year, after the manner of the Latins.

II. In the eleventh century there was a singular practice existing in the monastery of Cluny in administering the Blessed Eucharist, namely, that of dipping the Sacred Host into the Precious Blood before communicating the faithful: *Quotquot ipsum corpus dederit sacerdos, singulis sanguine prius intingit.*[1] The reason given for this was lest the heavy beards and long mustaches, worn by the faithful, might touch the Sacred Blood and thus an irreverence be committed against so great a Mystery. *Evenit enim frequenter ut barbati et prolixos habentes granos, dum poculum inter epulas sumunt, prius liquore pilos inficiant quam ori liquorem infundant.*[2] There is a marginal note which says that this is contrary to the practice of other churches, and then adds: *Quia quidam, maxime novitii nostri, adeo sunt rudes, ut si sanguinem ita separatim acciperent, non remaneret ut non magnam aliquando negligentiam incurrerent.*

In spite of these reasons the practice of Cluny was censured, and the Council of Clermont commanded the ancient practice of giving the Body and Blood of our Saviour separately to be adhered to.

III. What we are told took place in the last sickness of Maurice, Bishop of Paris, was an abuse and a great error. At times he was out of his mind, and once when he was in this state he earnestly demanded the Sacred Viaticum. Those about him, not daring to give him the Blessed Sacrament while his mind was wandering, persuaded a priest to bring him an unconsecrated host and in doing so to observe the usual ceremonies. As soon as the bishop saw the priest he said to him: *Tolle, tolle, non est Dominus Deus.* This was a

[1] Practices of Cluny collected by St. Udalric. [2] Ibid.

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great surprise to the bystanders, and the priest, returning to the church, brought a consecrated Host and gave it to the bishop, who, having received it with great piety and reverence, passed away full of faith and charity.[1]

Something of the same kind happened to Hugo of St. Victor. When on his bed of death he was troubled with a disordered stomach, and from fear of irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament an unconsecrated host was brought to him as Viaticum. God, to preserve his servant from material idolatry, revealed to him the artifice, and Hugo cried out: *Quare me decipere voluistis? Istud non est corpus Domini mei. Ite igitur securi et afferte verum Corpus Domini mei, quia scandalum nullum eveniet, Domino operante.* The brethren, perceiving they were discovered, asked his pardon, and, full of trust in Him who sees our most secret thoughts, brought him the Blessed Sacrament. The servant of God contemplated it lovingly, and, feeling that his condition was such that he could not safely receive it into his heart, uttered these words: *Ascendat filius ad Patrem suum et servus ad Dominum suum. Quibus dictis*, the chronicle adds: *Eucharistia disparuit, seu species illa, et ipse vir sanctus Deo suo spiritum reddit.*[2]

It is not our purpose to give in detail the abuses which may possibly creep in with regard to the use and administration of the Blessed Eucharist. Books professedly treating of this subject may be consulted, and among others the treatise *De l'exposition du Saint Sacrement de l'autel*, by Thiers, and his other treatise, *Des superstitions*, Vol. 2, although all his opinions should not be blindly accepted.

[1] Cesar of Heisterbach gives this in his *Illustrated Miracles*, IX. 43.
[2] Chron. Titul. XVIII. Cap. 1.

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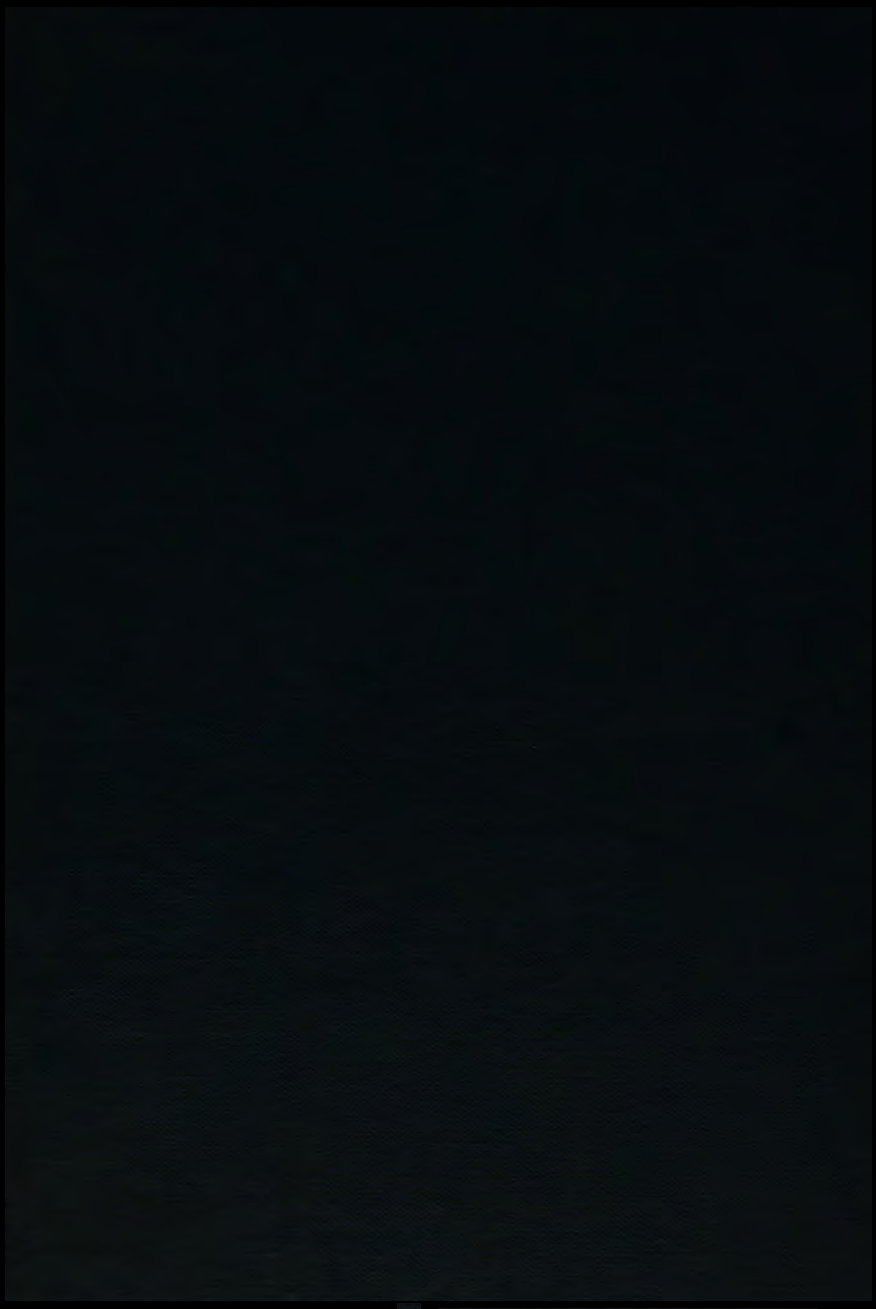
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